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V. G. Dunsenburgh

1823

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A
GUIDE TO THE ALTAR;

OR, THE
ADVANTAGES

OF

Frequent Communion,
In order to obtain Everlasting Life ;

SHOWN TO BE THE MOST POWERFUL HELP, AND THE GREATEST HAPPINESS IN THE WAY OF SALVATION,

For the Faithful of every state and condition of life ;

**Proved from the Holy Scriptures, the writings of the holy Fathers,
and from the practice of the Saints, and faithful of all ages.**

BY THE REV. A. CLINTON, *
Of the Society of Jesus.

*Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood,
you shall not have Life in you,*

John vi. 54.

**TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A DISCOURSE ON THE LOVE OF GOD.**

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TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
FATHER IN GOD R. C. D. D. *Copfinger*
McCoy
McCoy
&c. &c. *McCoy*

MY LORD,

I Humbly beg leave to lay at your feet the following pages, as to one, whose whole life, doctrine and example, have particularly inculcated the useful and necessary documents which they contain. Should my endeavours prove, in any degree, beneficial, I am sure to meet with your Lordship's approbation; or should they be less successful than I wish them to be, I shall still hope for that share of indulgence

on your part, which my involuntary deficiency may stand in need of.

With great pleasure I avail myself of this opportunity, to assure your Lordship that I sincerely revere your manifold virtues, and remain with the most perfect respect and esteem,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Devoted and Faithful

Humble Servant,

A. C.

reads Sermon on the Mount with
the Obedience of Confession etc: with this text,

CHAPTER I.

a certain man made a great supper and
invited many. *Luke 14*
The pretended Respect for the blessed Eu-
charist, which withdraws the faithful
from frequent Communion, is erroneous
and dangerous.

THE Holy Ghost warns us to avoid
giving ear to every report, or credit to
every appearance of rectitude and vir-
tue *, because deceit is often palliated
with a cloak of justice, and error lies
frequently masked under the features
of truth. Most, if not all religious
matters, have been at times misunder-
stood and traduced, and frequent com-
munion, perhaps as much as any other
religious duty, has been strangely mis-
construed. At this present time, thou-

* There is a way which seemeth just to a man, but
the ends thereof lead to death. Prov. xiv. 2.

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sands among the faithful labour under dangerous mistakes relative to this important question : even some of the pastors of the church of Christ, either vainly intimidated by certain fallacious reasonings on church discipline, or led away by a relish for rigorism, reluctantly teach and encourage frequent communion ; whilst others, less excusable, from an adoption of erroneous principles, positively oppose and condemn it : but what is no less remarkable than surprising, the loosest christians and the greatest sinners join in opinion with the rigorists, and unanimously applaud that false respect which with-holds from the sacred table, even at those times when a strict precept for communion is actually in force, and directly urging.

True respect, true humility, in the opinion of St. Gregory, consists in a docile submission to, and ready com-

pliance with what lawful authority enjoins as an useful help to salvation ; from whence ~~the~~ *scholastic Doctor*, St. Thomas, concludes, that there can be no real religion or humility in him, who, in opposition to the law of Christ or of his church, and I venture to add, in opposition to the opinion of every prudent and discreet director*, abstains from communion.

The expression of St. Cyril of Alexandria on this subject, is extremely forcible, and claims great attention ;
“ If we would attain life everlasting,
“ if we would possess the Author of
“ immortality, let us readily and willingly receive the Eucharist ; and let
“ us be greatly on our guard lest the

* Ideò non potest esse laudabilis humilitas, si contra præceptum Christi & Ecclesiæ aliquis omnino a communione absineat. D. Thom. 3. p. q. 80. ar. 11. ad 1.

“ devil should ensnare us in a damnable religion, through a pretended motive of respect for this sacrament.”*

From these words it evidently appears, that this delusive respect and mistaken religion, is an old stratagem, which this holy father terms a damnable religion, of which he assigns the devil as the author, and styles it an infernal artifice, against which we should greatly be guarded.

The above sentence the Church has inserted into the office of the blessed sacrament, on the last day of the Octave, that all bishops and priests, in every part of the world, and in every age, might

* Nos verò si vitam æternam consequi volumus si largitorem immortalitatis habere in nobis desideramus, ad recipiendam benedictionem libenter concurramus; caveamusque, ne loco laquei, damnosam religionem diabolus nobis prætendat, Saint. Cyril l. 4. in Joan. chap. 17.

join this holy father in publishing to the faithful, that the religion which indiscriminately dissuades and withdraws them, from a participation of the Eucharist, is dangerous, hurtful and diabolical.

And, in fact, nothing can be more suitable to the evil designs and malicious purposes of the common enemy to man, than this false religion, for the Eucharist is of all the sacraments the most salutary and beneficial to Christian people; it is the very source of all heavenly graces: it consequently must follow, that the longer we abstain from it, the fewer of these graces we shall ordinarily obtain: tepidity will presently succeed to our primitive fervor, and the vigor of our souls will soon sink into a languid state of remissness.

The man who should abstain from all corporal nourishment, would inevitably perish, were there no other cause

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for his dissolution ; in like manner the Christian, who for any length of time refrains from this heavenly food, must droop in spirit, and slacken in the path of virtue ; the aspect of sin will gradually acquire stronger charms, and the grace of God, after a feeble resistance, will depart from his soul.

The argument taken from the respect due to this great mystery, which by some is held out as a motive to abstain from communion, though at first sight it may seem plausible, is, in fact, void of solidity and truth. The real and true glory of Jesus Christ in the blessed Eucharist, is best seen when he reigns over the hearts of his followers, and receives their adorations on the one hand, whilst he on the other sanctifies them with his adorable flesh, purifies them from vice, firmly establishes them

in virtue, and at length transforms them into himself. By a frequent participation of this life-giving food, we insensibly become celestial and divine, like our adorable Master ; our thoughts are fixed on him, and we no longer live but for him. Whereas unfrequent communion directly tends to set bounds to the mighty power, which otherwise he would exert in our behalf in the Eucharist, and contracts that empire and dominion which he so justly claims over all the faculties of our soul. When we communicate but seldom, we gradually lose sight of his grandeur, and his infinite unchangeable beauty insensibly ceases to charm us. Our faith decays, our hope languishes, our charity cools, and Jesus Christ, in his sacrament, is presently neglected and forgotten ; for though it be true, that there are other means of salvation be-

sides frequent communion, it is not, however, less true, that frequent communion is of all others the most efficacious, and the best adapted to our weakness. This one source alone affords more abundant graces than all other means put conjointly together, and from this help alone we may become what we are created to be, good and perfect Christians : and as the possession of Jesus Christ is what will constitute our eternal felicity hereafter in Heaven, so the present fruition of him in his adorable sacrament, is the only thing which constitutes our happiness upon earth. Our common enemy, but too sensible of this important truth, is constantly at work to throw a veil over it, and strives, by every means, to obstruct a communication between frail man and this inexhaustible fund of every virtue and blessing.

The famous general of the Assyrian army, Holofernes, in the course of twenty days reduced the Bethulians to the greatest extremity of distress, by intercepting those channels of water which used to supply their wants, and by posting strong guards at every neighbouring spring from whence they might draw relief. Not unlike to this stratagem is the artifice of the devil to withhold the unwary faithful from the water of eternal life, which incessantly flows from the blessed Eucharist; he surrounds, with strong guards, this living spring of the blood of Christ by obtruding a reverential fear that may make us dread an approach, and a religious awfulness that may make us stand at a distance; by this pernicious fallacy, thousands have fallen a prey to his tyranny, they have thirsted like earth without water, and have finally

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perished : thus has this adorable sacrament been as useless to thousands, as if its institution had been ever a secret to them.

I dare further assert, that the supposed reverence or respect which withdraws from communion, has frequently even deviated into heresy against the real presence in the Eucharist, and from an opposition to this capital point of our holy religion, have some been led to oppose Christianity itself.

In fact, ²this false respect for communion, what does ~~it~~ naturally and generally lead to? At first it occasions an ^{keeping away} estrangement from the holy table, ~~this~~ estrangement brings on an indifference, indifference produces contempt, contempt, infidelity, or unbelief in a point which is distinctly and authentically revealed.

During the ten first centuries of the Church, as communion was in frequent and even daily use, no doubt ever arose concerning the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; the fathers and the faithful believed it with a liveliness of faith, which to this day excites our admiration: but when unfortunately communion began to be neglected, christian fervor also began to decline, and in the eleventh century, Berſingarius, (Archdeacon of Angers,) first, since the establishment of the Church of Christ, dared to call in question this capital article; he was not quite without adherents: his doctrine was, at three separate times, juridically and unanimously condemned, and he himself as often, but particularly on his death-bed, renounced and condemned it. Since the days of Berſingarius, this dogma of our faith (as a

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learned and judicious author observes) has been no where opposed, but where through a depravation of morals, the belief and the use of the Eucharist had been on the decline*.

Experience sufficiently evinces that a *general* corruption of manners, is the necessary result of a general neglect of communion: the strong opposition which the Gospel meets with among men, the unbridled wantonness of youth, the inveteracy of vicious habits in advanced age, the general crimes which infest society, the loose, the libertine way of thinking, which in these days

Quò ardentior erat fides in Ecclesiâ Catholicâ eò
FREQUENTIOR erat usus hujus sacramenti. *Et inferius.* Licet animadvertere nunquam fuisse dubitatum de veritate corporis Christi, donec adedò refrizit ardor ille veterum Christianorum ut vix singulis annis communicarent. Maldonatus, lib. de sacr. Euch. conject. 10.

is held up as an ornament even to the name of a Christian, are to be ascribed to no other cause, than to a neglect, followed by a disbelief of the advantage and necessity of frequent communion.

Is man then, at all times, to be a dupe to the wiles of the Serpent! At the creation, this malicious enemy brought ruin on our parents and their progeny, by prevailing on them to eat of the forbidden fruit: *eat, you shall not die, you shall be like gods.* They believed and transgressed the command of their Maker, they lost their innocence and their seat of bliss. And now, when Jesus Christ says to us, *eat of my flesh and you shall have life everlasting*, the infernal fiend inverts the assertion, saying, eat not of the Eucharist, lest you should die. Alas! how many, from one motive or other,

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unfortunately listen to him ! they eat not of this real fruit of life, and consequently they die.

CHAPTER. II.

The Words of Jesus Christ when he instituted the Eucharist, imply frequent Communion.

LET the candid and impartial ^{Reader} (reader,) figuring himself present at the last supper, attentively consider the significant words our blessed Redeemer made use of, in the institution of the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist ; a few serious reflections on what was said on this solemn occasion, will, I doubt not, ascertain the doctrine of frequent communion.

When Jesus Christ, by innumerable miracles, had proved his power and divinity in the face of his followers and of all Judea, on the eve of that memorable day which was to terminate his precious life, he proceeded on to the grand master-piece of all his wonders; and having washed the feet of his twelve apostles, he took bread, lifted up his eyes to heaven, broke it, blessed it, and said, *take ye and eat, this is my body**. He also took the cup, and said, *drink ye all of this, this is my blood*†. Three of the evangelists relate this same event, in which, it is to be observed, Christ does not say, this is my body which you are to venerate and to adore, but *take ye and eat* : as if he would say, this is the great homage you are to pay

* Matth. xxvi. 26.

† Ibid.

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me; this is the use you are to make of my body, you are to make it your food, nay, your daily, or at least, your frequent food: for the general and obvious meaning of the word eating, implies the taking of frequent nourishment. We commonly say of one, who seldom takes nourishment, that he does not eat: and when a physician bids his patient eat of such a food, there is no one who would not understand from thence, that that sort of aliment was to be his daily support. Besides, it is most credible that our Redeemer gave us his adorable flesh as the frequent nourishment of our souls, from his having instituted this sacrament under the appearance of bread. For if our communions were intended to be unfrequent, why did he not, as he might have done, constitute his sacred body under the form of

some precious remedy, or of some rare and delicate food? Remedies are seldom used, dainties are seldom eaten; while nothing is so common as to feed on bread, and of course, nothing should be more usual to a Christian, than to eat of the heavenly bread of the Eucharist.

This opinion receives light and confirmation from what we are taught to say in the Lord's Prayer, when we petition for our daily bread: our Saviour terms this daily bread *supersubstantial*, or a bread above all substance*, which can be understood only of Jesus Christ himself, who is the celestial bread that came down from heaven: to imagine that we were here taught to confine our wishes to a material bread, and to sue for nothing more

* Matth. vi. 11

than what is needful to support this mass of clay and corruption, would be to form a supposition greatly unbecoming the belief of a Christian, and equally injurious to the wisdom of our Master. When we have prayed that the name of our heavenly Father may be adored and universally glorified by all, that we at last may be so happy, as to reign with him in his everlasting kingdom, and that, to be made worthy of so exalted a favour, we may be submissive, whilst upon earth, to his blessed will, in the manner that the saints in heaven are actually conformed to it, we cannot doubt but the following petition regards that help and succour, which bears a proportion to so noble and dignified an end, and the bread we are bid to ask for, is a bread *above all substance*; a

bread*, which alone deserves the name of true food for man, because it is that bread alone that imparts heavenly life both to the soul and body of man; in short, it is Jesus Christ himself whom he would have us ask for, as the daily nourishment to our souls. *to bring them to life we are acting.*

Let us proceed further, and still *Lesson 2* more amply trace the meaning of our divine Master. About twelve months before his passion, he solemnly promised, to a great multitude of people, the institution of this great sacrament. *I am the bread of life†, the bread which cometh down from heaven. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh*

* True bread . . . my flesh is meat indeed . . . He that eateth my flesh, has everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. John vi.

† John vi. 48. 49. 52. 56.

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down from heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die ; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world, for my flesh is meat indeed. The same doctrine does he inculcate in twelve different verses of the sixth chapter in St. John. From whence I reason thus ; we take nourishment not only once in a year or even once in a week, but we feed ourselves every day, we eat bread daily : the Eucharist is truly our bread, it is meat indeed ; what motive then can hinder us from concluding, that it is designed and instituted for the daily food of our souls.

In the last mentioned chapter, our divine Master minutely enlarges on every particular ; he enforces his doctrine in the strongest terms ; the words he expresses himself in, are as clear as they are energetic, and the whole of

his discourse invariably insinuates frequent communion; and that we may not doubt that such is his meaning, nor hesitate in our belief, that he even commands it, he at one time extols the excellency of this bread of life, of this bread that is come down from heaven, of this *bread*, he says, *which is my flesh*: at another time, he promises rewards to those who shall eat of it, I will raise him; *he shall have eternal life*: and again, lest the excellence of this bread, and the splendid rewards annexed to the eating of it should prove insufficient to bring us to an union with himself, he proceeds to threats, by a most solemn asseveration*: and here we are to observe, that it is a God who says, *my flesh is meat in-*

* Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat of the flesh of the son of man, you shall not have life in you.

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deed : and that the same God threatens, *unless you eat*. His offer must needs astonish us ; it is a prodigy of love ! but his menaces are greatly alarming, for should we be less pliable to his request, than it is his desire that we should, we infallibly must perish.

The comparison which he makes between this heavenly bread, and the manna which, for the space of forty years, fed the Israelites in the Desert, cannot but attract the attention of every unprejudiced reader. The motive for the comparison seems obvious. The manna fell from heaven daily : it was gathered daily ; and it was the daily food of that chosen people. The bread of life is Jesus Christ, who comes daily from heaven to feed his Christian people ; it therefore is most expedient and proper, that we should daily support ourselves with this heavenly nou-

ishment. Can it be an easy matter to any mind, though never so cap-
tiously inclined, to misconstrue the
meaning of our blessed Lord, into any
other sense?

The above inference is still more
solidly established when we reflect on
the views our Redeemer proposed to
himself, by giving us this wonderful
sacrament. His own glory, and our
welfare and happiness, we believe, were
what he had in view in this marvel-
lous institution. He meant to furnish
us with lasting and continued means
of love and adoration, of praise and
thanksgiving for the innumerable bles-
sings which he continually bestows
upon us, and this he particularly ex-
presses immediately after the institution,
*do this for a commemoration of me**, as
if he had said, that you may not too

Luke xxii.

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readily forget the many things I have done for you, and too easily lose the idea of my miracles, of my bounty and of my grandeur : to prevent this forgetfulness to guard against your ingratitude, “ I, invisibly indeed, but “ really will come and dwell amongst “ you ; and as often as you receive “ me in the Eucharist, I will renew in “ your hearts the remembrance of all “ my wonderful works.” Now, in supposition that we receive but seldom, there will be need of little argument to shew, that we shall also seldom or never think either of him or of his favors.

But the glory due to our Redeemer is not alone the result from frequent communion ; the happiness also of man is equally connected with, and in general depends on it. To be saved, we must be healed of our infirmities and

weaknesses, we must be adorned with those virtues which our divine Master points out to us for practice ; we must resemble him, we must put on, nay, even transform ourselves into Jesus Christ, and become the living images of the Son of God. It is for these great purposes that he condescends to reside in the Eucharist, that by his habitual presence, he may continually cure us of our spiritual maladies, that he may afford us continual help and assistance, and that he may advance us daily to a nearer resemblance with the God of virtue and perfection. “ Behold I am with you all “ days *, even to the consummation of “ the world.”

Nor can it be said with any degree of propriety, or appearance of truth, that Jesus Christ would be equally

* Math. xxviii. 20,

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honoured, or that our welfare would be equally consulted, if, while he is exposed on our altars, and resides in our tabernacles, he should only be the object of our daily veneration : nothing, indeed, is impossible to God, and therefore in his wisdom he might have annexed to external worship, every means conducive to his glory, and beneficial to us. But it is not what his power can effect, that we are now in search of, but precisely what our blessed Redeemer did mean and intend when he instituted his sacrament, and what he daily means and intends by continuing to dwell amongst us. In his command, he lays no stress on our veneration, he mentions and insists only on a corporeal union : *Take ye and eat, this is my body : my flesh is meat indeed.* It is this manducation which he insinuates, and which he com-

mands : to this, and to this alone does his promise extend, of diffusing in our hearts his sanctifying grace, and on this does he establish for himself that supreme honor which he justly claims from his creatures. *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And, He abideth in me, and I in him*.* That is, he who eats my flesh shall have eternal life, by means of that grace which this divine food procures him : and this is man's greatest felicity : whilst we, by the same means, are allowed to reign in his heart, and this is our glory. Frequent, and even daily communion, is therefore the immediate and essential design of the institution of the Eucharist : for our Lord is ever desirous both to effect our salvation, and promote his own glory,

John vi. 52, 57.

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by giving us this daily food : for which reason he constantly repeats what he said to Zacheus, *Make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house**.

But what ! will some one exclaim, is not the blessed Eucharist the greatest, the noblset of all sacraments ; is it not there we approach the God of majesty and grandeur, whose judgments are terrible, whose justice is tremendous ; a God, before whom the angels themselves tremble, whilst they adore him ? And dare we believe that Jesus Christ would lavish himself for our daily food, that he would have us feast daily at his adorable table ? How incredible soever this truth may appear, we are not permitted to call it in question : and we shall facilitate our belief if we reflect, that though the old law

* Luke xix. 25.

was a law of terror and of justice, yet that which we have the happiness to live under, is a law of grace and of mercy. Our divine legislator, upon every occasion, displays his boundless love for us, and all the merciful effects of his copious redemption. He would have the happy influence of his holy religion greatly to exceed the munificence and generosity of the famous Ahasuerus, whose pomp and magnificence were but a shadow and an imperfect type of what is effected in the Eucharist.

We read in holy writ*, that this powerful monarch, to shew forth his grandeur and riches, and to render conspicuous the glory of his reign, made a great feast, to which he invited all the grandees and nobles of his empire, the officers of his armies, and

* Esther i.

the most distinguished personages of every province throughout his dominions: the inhabitants also, from the highest to the lowest, of his vast and populous metropolis, were desired to partake of it. A royal magnificence shone forth on all sides, and on all sides were hung up sky-coloured, green and violet hangings, guided by cords of silk and of purple, moving in ivory rings, and supported by pillars of marble. The beds also were of gold and silver, regularly placed upon floors paved with porphiry and white marble, which was beautifully embellished with paintings of wonderful variety. The meats were delicious, while most exquisite wines flowed in abundance from golden cups. Every one had every thing at will. This wonderful feast lasted a hundred and fourscore days; and the whole city of Shusan resounded

with the praises of the bounteous and powerful Ahasuerus.

Jesus Christ speaking of his religion, and of the chief mystery it contains, which is the Eucharist, represents it to us, in two different places of the gospel, under the name of a great feast, to which many are invited. *A certain man made a great supper, and invited many*.*

This banquet of Jesus Christ, which ever way we consider it, is by far preferable to, and infinitely more magnificent than that of Ahasuerus ; here, it is the King of kings, the sovereign Lord and Master of heaven and earth, who invites, not only the inhabitants of one town or country, but all nations and kingdoms of the world ; and the meat which is put before them is nothing less than the adorable and pre-

Matth. xxii. 2. Luke xiv. 16.

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cious body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ himself. Instead of one place of resort, there are numberless churches built, and sumptuous altars erected in all parts of the universe, where this feast is celebrated; and there is still a greater number of officers and ministers of this great king, whose sole employ it is to dispose the faithful for this heavenly entertainment, and to distribute amongst them this bread of angels.

But what eminently distinguishes this feast above every other, and marks its peculiar characteristic, is the ever-flowing source of all graces and blessings. Here the faithful leisurely taste of every celestial delight, drink at the fountain of real felicity, and receive at each communion fresh pledges of eternal bliss. It is here also, where they praise and glorify the riches and

munificence of the goodness of their God, where they incessantly admire the effulgence of his majesty and power, and gratefully acknowledge their distinguished happiness, in living under the dominion of so great and bounteous a king, while at the same time, they are fraught with a well-grounded hope of soon reigning with Christ in heaven. Thus would our Redeemer have his holy religion become a continual feast to every believer, for all such are his subjects, his friends, his brethren and his children. He seems to pay no regard to the consideration, that a frequent and constant communion with his creatures, might possibly lessen in them the respect which is due to himself. On the contrary his whole attention apparently inclines to obviate any slight on our part, of his most kind and all-bounteous invitation.

D

Ahasuerus would have justly taken offence if any of his numerous guests had shewed an indifferance to his royal condescension: he would have thought the dignity of his throne degraded into contempt, and his own personal merit sunk into dishonor. Any other conduct from his subjects, besides a grateful acceptance and a chearful fruition of his favours, and that to the full extent of the meaning of their sovereign, as it inevitably would have reflected disgrace, inevitably also would it have excited resentment. A much greater injury is done to Jesus Christ, the King of kings, as often as we, regardless of his invitation, and even disobedient to his express command, either totally absent ourselves from his royal table, or seldom approach near it. Our respect for so great a master, as it admits of no kind of refusal, can

only be manifested by a submissive obedience to his orders, and a ready compliance with his all-gracious will.

That such are his sentiments, he sufficiently declares from the parable in which he personates a certain man, who invited many to a great supper: the time for supper being at hand, he sent his servant to acquaint the guests that every thing was in readiness: but they, from various motives, sent back their excuses: at which, the master of the house being angry, said to his servants, *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the feeble, and the blind and the lame**. This being complied with, and there still remaining room, he sent a second time with this order, *Go out into the highways and behind the hedges, and compel them to come in; that*

* Luke XIV. 21.

my house may be filled. And finally, he pronounced this formidable sentence: *I say unto you, that none of those men who were invited shall taste of my supper**. We read in St. Matthew a similar parable of a great king, who gave a great entertainment. From both which representations it is obvious to remark that, the former guests having slighted the invitation, both the king and the landlord sent for others at sundry times, and always with the greatest expedition and seemingly with a degree of impatience: which properly expresses the ardent zeal of Jesus Christ in favour of frequent communion: his zeal is roused even into anger, and he considers their excuses as so many injuries offered to himself. He moreover gives an order to his servant, to *tell* the guests *that*

* Matth. xxii.

all is ready ; go quickly and bring them hither, adding, compel them to come in, and make use of a salutary violence, that my table may be full. This servant represents the ministers of Jesus Christ, whose essential duty it is to persuade their flock to frequent communion, and when once they have engaged their wills into a compliance, they are next to dispose them for a worthy reception. From all which, we may most safely conclude, that Jesus Christ invites us most eagerly, commands us most peremptorily to communicate often, and threatens so rigorously in case of non-compliance, that the whole gospel relative to the Eucharist, seems but one continued sermon and precept to enforce frequent communion. From the considerations of the words of our Redeemer, let us proceed to his actions.

CHAPTER III.

The Actions of Jesus Christ, which relate to the Eucharist, imply the Obligation of frequent Communion.

THE works of our Redeemer are as instructive as his words, and often express, after a more lively manner, his power, wisdom and bounty. "Our Lord," says St. Gregory, "instructs us some times by words, some times by actions, nay, his actions are often so many commands, because they tacitly point out to us the path which we are to follow*." In this chapter, two of our Saviour's

* Dominus Salvator aliquando sermonibus, aliquando verò operibus nos admonet, ipsa etenim facta ejus, præcepta sunt; quia dum tacitus facit aliquid, quid agere debeamus innotescit.

Greg. Hom. 17. in Evan.

miracles shall come under inspection, which, from their different circumstances, will lay open to us his intention to establish frequent communion. The first of these is the multiplication of the five loaves, which preceded by twelve months the institution of the blessed Eucharist, and happened about Easter-time. The four Evangelists relate the fact in the following manner*: Jesus Christ, from the summit of a mountain where he was seated, beholding a great multitude of people, took pity on them ; he spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God, and cured the sick of their infirmities. As the day began to decline, his twelve apostles came and said to him, “ We are here in a desert place, and “ the time for refreshment is over,

* Matth. xiv. Mark vi. Luke ix. John vi.

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“ dismiss the people, that they may
“ provide themselves with nourishment
“ and lodging in the neighbouring
“ towns and villages: they have no
“ occasion to move from hence, said
“ our Lord, give you them to eat:
“ and they said, we have no more than
“ five loaves and two fishes, unless
“ perhaps we should go and buy food
“ for all this multitude. There were
“ about five thousand men. And he
“ said to his disciples, make them sit
“ down by fifties in a company.
“ They did so, and taking the five
“ loaves and the two fishes, he looked
“ up to heaven, and blessed them, and
“ he broke, and distributed to his dis-
“ ciples to set before the multitude;
“ and they did all eat, and were
“ filled. And there were taken up
“ of the fragments that remained
“ twelve baskets. And those men,

“ when they had seen what a miracle
“ Jesus had done, said, this is of truth
“ the prophet that is to come into the
“ world. Jesus therefore, when he
“ knew they would come to take him
“ by force and make him king, fled
“ again into the mountain alone by
“ himself.”

This wonderful multiplication is un-
exceptionably one of the most conspi-
cuous miracles we read of in the New
Testament, and the singularity of it,
as well as the importance of its
tendency, is what most probably in-
duced the four Evangelists to be so
unanimous and particular in the rela-
tion of it. It was not the manifesta-
tion of his goodness or power which
our Saviour had directly in view upon
this occasion. At other times he had
sufficiently convinced his followers of
both the one and the other ; his prin-

capital design here was to establish a fundamental doctrine of the religion he was come to preach, to facilitate the belief of it, and insinuate the daily advantages which were to accrue from it to Christian people. This capital point was the blessed Eucharist: and this miracle was a kind of preliminary and introduction to his subsequent discourse on the Eucharistical subject. It is in this sense that the holy fathers and interpreters understand and explain it*. And a little attention to the proceeding of our Redeemer, and to the method he takes to introduce his doctrine, will make it palpable and obvious.

The day after this prodigy, the multitude came in search of him, and he, availing himself of the astonish-

* S. Cyprianus Ep. Aug. 63. in Joan. 6. cit. a divo Thoma in Catena. Maldon. in Matth. xiv.

ment they still were in, said,* “ You
“ seek me, not because you have seen
“ miracles which prove my divinity,
“ but because I fed you yesterday, and
“ ye were filled. Labour not for the
“ meat which perisheth, but for that
“ which endureth unto life everlast-
“ ing ; and this food the son of man
“ will give you. The people asked,
“ What must we do to work the works
“ of God? Jesus answered, You must
“ believe that I am the Son of God :
“ They again asked, by what miracle
“ do you prove to us that you are the
“ Son of God? Moses fed our fathers
“ in the desert with a bread from hea-
“ ven, not only once as you have
“ done, but for the space of forty
“ years ; work you a like miracle and
“ we will believe in you.” From

John vi. 26.

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these words of the the Jews, the divine Jesus took occasion to raise their thoughts to the great mystery of the blessed Eucharist, in the following manner: "Moses did not give you
" a true bread from heaven, it was an
" aëreal bread; my Father gives you
" the true bread from heaven, for the
" bread of God is that which comes
" down from heaven and gives life to
" the world. His hearers, ravished
" with the excellency of this bread,
" cried out, Lord, give us ALWAYS
" this bread." What expression could
at once more plainly and more forcibly
prove frequent communion, whether
we consider the words of our Redeemer,
or those of his hearers? These, on
their side, demand a miraculous and
daily nourishment, similar to that of
the manna; and Jesus, on his side, ac-
quiesces in their demand, and promises

to give them this daily food, but a food by far more marvellous than the other, a food quite heavenly and divine. But how different soever this food may be from the manna, in respect to its excellence and the advantages it imparts, in the comparison they are on a level with regard to frequent and even daily communion.

It is further to be remarked, that our divine Lord never entered on any great mystery, without previously engaging the attention, and disposing the minds of his hearers by some wonderful works which bore an analogy with his words; and with admirable wisdom he invariably adapted his actions to the doctrine he was going to teach. Thus, to confirm his ensuing resurrection, he frequently effected the resurrection of others, that his doctrine might receive force from the exertion of his

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power, as he himself expresses it:
“ Now I have told you before it come
“ to pass, that when it shall come to
“ pass, you may believe*.” And,
“ If you will not believe me, believe
“ my works †.”

In like manner does he proceed in instituting the Eucharist. Through an excess of love for mankind, his desire is to feed them with his adorable flesh for their sanctification. The mystery is incomprehensibly great. Before he manifests his desire and all-bounteous intention, he astonishes his disciples and a multitude of people by a striking miracle: this once performed, the wonder of feeding the universe with an eucharistical bread must occasion less surprise, from the evidence that thousands had actually been fed

* John xiv. 29. † *Ibid.* x. 38.

with a miraculous bread. The prodigy they were eye-witnesses to, must naturally incline the beholders to a belief of the other prodigy, which is promised to man for the life of the world. From these previous observations on the institution of the Eucharist in general, I now come to a particular disquisition into the intention of the frequent acception of it. All, and each individual circumstance combine to assert it.

“ Yesterday, said our Lord, you were
“ fed with an earthly and corruptible
“ bread : but I would have you look
“ after a food that procures eternal
“ life ; this food the son of man alone
“ can give you, and the son of man will
“ give it you.” Here the comparison
begins ; let us trace it through every analogous circumstance which intervenes between the figurative miracle of five

loaves, and that wonderful bread which was figured and typically represented.

Our divine Master looks down with compassion on a fatigued and famished multitude of people, and works a miracle to solace and refresh them : with an equal and ever attentive bounty and piteous concern had he long beheld the feeble and drooping universe on the brink of ruin, and through a superior and more lasting miracle, he profers to the human race a heavenly nourishment, for their future support, which shall be efficacious enough at once to bestow life on them, and preserve it amongst them, His goodness leads him to a sense of our wants, while his power enables him continually to supply them.

He excites his disciples to relieve their fellow creatures in distress : “ You “ give them to eat ;” in like manner

does he actually inflame his ministers with the desire of administering his adorable sacrament. From the arrangement of the multitude into ranks of hundreds and fifties, we obviously discern the great care which is taken, that none should be deprived of the favour, or overlooked in the distribution. Similar is his attention to the universal distribution of the eucharistical bread, which he gives for the life of the world. The nations of the earth divided into dioceses and parishes, and headed by innumerable pastors, impartially share of this heavenly food, without distinction of rank or condition.

Bread, the most common human sustenance, is the matter of this miracle : and this same matter is used, consecrated, and exchanged into the body of Jesus Christ, to be the daily and common nourishment of our souls.

The apostles are gifted with the power of multiplying the loaves in behalf of their brethren : the ministers of the altar consecrate daily ; the eucharistic bread multiplies in their hands, the distribution of which is made with the greatest facility. The drift of the whole apparatus was the corporal refection of the people, and this refection is taken daily : the design of the sacramental bread is the spiritual refection of our souls, of which we are daily in equal need. Our spiritual support therefore is the grand object which brought on the institution of this heavenly bread, which substantially contains the adorable flesh of our Redeemer. “ The bread that I will give, is my “ flesh for the life of the world*.”

This significant miracle, two months after, was followed and enforced by

* John vi. 52.

another, the nature and circumstances of which were, more or less, every way similar to those of the former. St. Matthew and St. Mark relate, that on this occasion, there were but four thousand men, inclusive of women and children, and that with seven loaves, which our Saviour took, blessed, broke, gave to his apostles, and they to the people, seven baskets were filled with the fragments, when they had been all satiated.

The first of these two wonders, preceded our Saviour's promise of the Eucharist, as an introduction to so sublime a doctrine, and as an item of the exalted end for which it, was designed. The second was subsequent to his bounteous promise, in order to corroborate and ascertain the truth and reality of it: both the one and the other were wrought within a twelve-month

of that divine institution, and from the uniformity of their circumstances, they both clearly demonstrate, that Jesus Christ is that omnipotent God of nature who has power to change bread into his adorable body, for the daily nourishment of those who love him, and that his mercy and goodness are equally conspicuous with his mighty power ; while he renews * the remembrance of all his wonderful works, by giving a heavenly food to those who fear him. He is desirous that this remembrance should be perpetuated to the latest times ; and observing that his apostles were growing unmindful of those two emblems of his unspeakable bounty, he reprehends their forgetfulness, and condemns their indifference, † “ Do you not understand

* Psalm cx.

† Matth. xvi. 9. 10.

“neither do you remember the five
“loaves among five thousand men,
“and how many baskets you took up :
“nor the seven loaves among four
“thousand men, and how many bas-
“kets you took up ?”

Let us now examine our Saviour's apparition to the disciples of Emmaus, and the singular circumstances with which it was accompanied *. Our Lord, being seated with them at table, took bread, blessed it, and having broken it, gave it them to eat, when instantaneously they knew him, while he, as suddenly, vanished from their sight. They then said to each other, did not our hearts glow within us, whilst he was speaking to us on the road ? They returned to Jerusalem, informed the apostles of the wonder, and that,

Luke xxiv. 18.

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in the breaking of bread, their eyes had been opened. The same evening, whilst they were talking of these things, the doors being shut, Jesus stood in the midst of them, saying, "Peace be to you, it is I, fear not."

From all which it is obvious to observe, that Jesus Christ, when in company with his two disciples, consecrated the holy Eucharist. This seems to admit of no manner of doubt : for St. Luke, in the account he gives of this memorable fact, makes use of the same terms in which he, and the other evangelists express themselves, when they circumstantially relate the first institution of it. The authority also of tradition strongly supports the observation; to which St. Jerom adds, that in course of time the house of Cleophas was consecrated into a church, from its having been a place where our Lord had of-

ferred the eucharistic sacrifice, and distributed his adorable sacrament. It is also to be observed, that our blessed Redeemer, from amongst all his marvelous works, would chuse to single out holy communion, as a proper means to manifest himself to his followers, as a particular prodigy, which bore no resemblance with any of those miracles we read of among the patriarchs and prophets, and as a wonder which was the master-piece of all the wonders he had ever performed.

From these premises it is most natural to conclude, that our Saviour must have had communion greatly at heart, and that his zeal for ascertaining it must have been great and ardent, since on the day of his resurrection, he would consecrate and distribute the Eucharist, as if he would make known to the world that, at the time he asserted his di-

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vinity by virtue of his resurrection, he then also would ratify the reality of this sacrament, and confirm the use of it, which he had prescribed at the Cene. This further appears, from the testimony which the two disciples gave on their return to Jerusalem, when they alledged to the apostles, as the most incontestible proof of the truth of his resurrection, that they had known our Lord in the communion they received from him ; and while they were yet in conversation together on this subject, Jesus shewed himself to them, thus at once strengthening them in the belief both of his resurrection, and the reality of the Eucharist.

Whether then we consider the institution of the Eucharist, under the appearance of bread, which is a daily food ; whether we examine our Saviour's express words, his parables or

his miracles, either before or after his resurrection, we cannot reasonably doubt but it is the intention of Jesus Christ that we should receive him frequently in his sacrament, and that it is his delight to dwell among the children of men, whose greatest happiness it should be to live habitually in him, while he reciprocally lives in them.

CHAPTER IV.

The Doctrine and Practice of the Apostles and of the primitive Christians, prove the Expediency of frequent Communion.

It will be readily granted, that the apostles were the best interpreters of the meaning and intentions of their master in every point of his doctrine, and consequently in that which concerns the

Eucharist. They had frequently heard him discourse on the subject, and all of them were present at the last supper. After the resurrection of our Lord, for the space of forty days, they received more ample instructions from him, and being ascended into heaven, he sent them his holy spirit, who, in his unerring wisdom, taught them all truth, and enabled them to form the infant-church perfectly on the plan, and in the spirit of their Master.

St. Peter, at the head of those founders of christianity, in two sermons, brought over to the faith eight thousand people ; to these, acceded a daily increase of believers, who, being initiated into the mysteries, by baptism, partook daily of the blessed Eucharist. This we find attested in the sacred history of the Acts of the Apostles, in

two different places. *They were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread**. And further on, the sacred writer informs us, “ That all the
“ faithful were together daily in the
“ Temple, breaking bread from house
“ to house †, that is, receiving the
“ blessed Eucharist, with simplicity
“ and purity of heart, transported with
“ joy, and thankful to God, and by
“ this their charitable and meek be-
“ haviour, becoming amiable to every
“ beholder.”

And here it is to be noticed, that the expression of breaking bread, is constantly employed by the inspired writers, to signify holy communion: it is an explanation given us by St. Paul, “ The bread, which we break,

* Acts. II. 42. † *Ibid.* II. 46, 47.

“ is it not the partaking of the body
“ of the Lord ?”* even those who err
in the belief of the real presence, in
this point coincide with ecclesiastical
tradition. It is also to be noticed, that
the apostles went daily among the
faithful to distribute the Eucharist,
daily breaking bread from house to house :
that this daily communion was the
source of real joy and sincere gratitude,
which broke forth into the praises of
the Lord, and that it was preceded by
great simplicity and purity of heart,
while it was followed by a conduct
charitable and irreprehensible.

This pre-supposed, I reason thus :
the primitive Christians communicated
daily ; their teachers were the apostles :
they persevered in the communion of
every day, because they persevered in

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

the doctrine of the apostles : therefore daily communion was an original document of the Christian religion, as it was delivered by the apostles to their followers. And this daily communion was the animation and soul of the primitive Church, the inexhaustible source from whence they derived their sanctity, and the life-giving food which formed them into heroes and saints. The authority of St. Paul adds weight to my argument ; he was not at the institution of the Eucharist, nor was he one of the first twelve apostles. The Church was in being, and he, her persecutor, till the Lord appeared to him and wrought his conversion.

“ This is what I hold from no man,
“ but what I have immediately learned
“ from the Lord, and what I also deli-
“ vered faithfully to you. The Lord
“ Jesus, the eve of his passion, took

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“ bread, broke it, gave thanks for the
“ power which his Father had given
“ him over all things, and said, take
“ ye and eat: this is my body which
“ shall be delivered up for you: do
“ this in remembrance of me*.” In
like manner he speaks of the chalice,
and concludes by saying, “ Do this as
“ often as you drink my blood, for the
“ commemoration of me.”

Thus having related the institution
of the Eucharist, in the same words
that three of the Evangelists make use
of, the apostle reassumes every part of
the mystery, and with his usual energy
announces, that the eucharistic sacri-
fice shall represent the sacrifice of the
cross, till Jesus Christ shall come to
judge the living and the dead, and
therefore shall continue to be offered

* 1 Cor. xi. 23.

daily, to the end of ages. * *As often as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come.*

Here the apostle, like the other evangelists, faithfully repeats the sacred words of our Saviour, *Take and eat, his is my body.* Words which point out and determine the frequent reception of the Eucharist, as an habitual and daily nourishment. He also lays great stress on his Master's repeated command, of eating his body in remembrance of him ; which remembrance he specifies also as the lively representation of the death of our Lord on the cross, and is uninterruptedly to be continued to the last day of the world. It therefore follows that communion also must be uninterrupted and daily;

1 Cor. xi. 26.

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because in those days, it always was inseparable from the sacrifice, among the laity as well as the clergy.

The apostle, indeed, by assuring us that it is the body of our Lord, which we receive, would have us form the most exalted ideas of the blessing bestowed on us; he therefore warns us to be cautious and circumspect, lest, through unworthiness, we should eat and drink, at this heavenly banquet, to our own ruin and condemnation: but he no where insinuates, that we are to abstain, or absent ourselves from it. In six different places, he enforces the duty of eating this bread, as an habitual and usual nourishment. The probation and self examination, which he would have every one to enter upon, is prescribed only as a due preparation for frequent communion, and by no means intended as the least obstacle to

the frequency of it. He therefore means that every Christain is first to take a survey of his interior, and, when by a serious examination, he has prepared his soul, let him receive the body of our Lord ; but if, in this scrutiny, he should discover that he is void of spiritual life, let him, by means of sacramental repentance, return to the state of grace, *and so let him eat of that bread* : in this, and no other sense, is St. Paul to be understood, and in this sense is he universally understood by the Church, as we shall see hereafter.

Neither should we be deterred from frequent communion, because we are told, that we may receive unworthily, in not distinguishing this heavenly bread, from the bread which is common. The instruction which is here intended, is that we are to receive this

sacrament with a lively faith concerning the real presence of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ therein contained, and with a heart averse to and disengaged from mortal sin. He who possesses this faith and purity of conscience, never can profane the body of Christ: nay, from the advice the apostle gives, of discerning the eucharistic from common bread, he points out that, when he wrote, communion was frequent, and that he admonished the faithful, that although they communicated daily, they did not however receive common bread, but the adorable body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The practice of St. Paul, was consonant to his doctrine. His writings to the Corinthians, and many passages in the history of the infant Church, sufficiently prove it. In his first Epistle

to the Corinthians, he deters the converted Gentiles not only from idolatry, but also from mixing with idolaters at their tables, where meats were served which had been offered to idols, and reasons thus: * “ The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? We all partake of the same bread; the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; you cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils. You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and the table of devils.” From whence I infer: 1. That the Eucharist is the body of our Lord:

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the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?

2. That all eat the same bread : *we all partake of the same bread.* 3. That communion is an act of religious worship : *are not they who eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?* 4. That communion is a daily act of this same worship : the apostle contrasts the eucharistical table, and the daily table of the idolaters, as if he said, you cannot sit down to the table of Jesus Christ in the morning, and to that of idolaters in the evening : *you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.* 5. I infer, that communion was in daily use ; for he speaks of it, as of a daily action : *the bread which we break,* and in this he obeyed his Master : *take ye, and eat.* Moreover, writing to the Hebrews,

he says, * *We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat, who serve the Tabernacle.* There consequently was an altar for Christians ; there was also a sacrifice ; there was a partaking and a manducation of this sacrifice, and therefore there was a communion as frequent as the sacrifice, which was offered daily, as constant tradition clearly demonstrates.

There are several other passages in the Acts of the Apostles, which strongly confirm the truth of my assertion. When the said apostle and Barnabas, were singled out by the Church of Antioch, for preachers to foreign nations, it was during the eucharistic sacrifice, which at that time was inseparable from communion, that the Holy Ghost commanded

* Heb i xii. 10.

the prophets and doctors of that Church, to send Paul and Barnabas for the conversion of the Gentiles.

** As they were ministering to the Lord, and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them separate me Paul and Barnabas.*

We read also, that St. Paul never omitted any opportunity of celebrating mass, and of communicating the faithful. He was once at Troas, on a Sunday, where the Christians assembled to break bread, and to hear his instructions: as he was to depart the following day, he protracted his discourse till mid-night †. The place of meeting was large, but well lighted up with lamps, and the congregation was numerous: among others there was a young man, by name Eutychus, who, probably for want of room, had seated

** Acts xiii. 2.*

† Ibid. xx. 7.

himself in a window, and being overcome by sleep, fell from the third story, and was taken up dead. Paul, moved to compassion, went to him directly, and brought him to life. He then returned to his functions, broke bread, consecrated, distributed the Eucharist, and departed early in the morning.

The fathers, especially St. Augustin, Baronius, and the most respectable interpreters, are particular in observing, that the apostle of the Gentiles, even in his most hurrying and fatiguing journies, was most constant and assiduous, in the consecration and distribution of the Eucharist; and that the Lord encreased his zeal for frequent communion, by the above mentioned conspicuous miracle.

The apostle, St. Andrew, being urged to offer incense to idols, and re-

nounce Jesus Christ, whose glory he was preaching, made answer to the proconsul Egeus, "I sacrifice daily on
" our altars to the only true omnipo-
" tent God, not the blood of oxen or
" of goats, but the immaculate Lamb;
" and when all the people have eaten
" of it, this Lamb remains whole and
" entire as at first*." We have this account from the priests and deacons of Achaia, who were witnesses of his sufferings, and hearers of his speeches. Nor is it much to be wondered at, that he who had been so familiar with the sacrifice of the cross, should have been so passionately fond of dying on a cross, and that, being fastened to it, for the space of two days, he should have so eloquently preached the advantages and excellencies of it.

* In Martyrio a Presbyteris & Diaconis Achaiae scripto.

CHAPTER. V.

The Doctrine and Practice of the ancient Fathers of the Church, prove also the Expediency of frequent Communion.

THE primitive Church was formed by the apostles only. Nor was she ever more worthy of our respect and imitation than in those happy days of innocence and purity of heart, of union with God, of real and true zeal for his honor and glory. Nay, we can only be deemed followers of Jesus Christ, from our resemblance with those fervorous souls. The spirit of Jesus Christ died not with the apostles; the Church has carefully preserved it, and transfused it down to our times, and with equal steadiness and zeal will continue to the end of the world, to

teach the necessity and advantage of frequent communion. We shall see, in the sequel of this treatise, that the ancient fathers, the doctors of the Church, the councils, the popes, and the saints, unanimously agree in this particular.

The canons which are ascribed to the apostles, are, without doubt, of great antiquity, and, with reason, are supposed to comprise the prevailing Church discipline of those days. We read in the ninth canon, the following regulation. * “ If a clerk, after having made the oblation, should not communicate, he must shew cause for his omission, that he may stand clear in the eyes of the public; but should he refuse to apologize, or should his apology be insufficient, let him

* Quos citant Cabass. & innumeri authores.

“ be excommunicated for the scandal
“ he has given.” And the tenth canon
imports, “ That those among the
“ faithful, who go to church without
“ communicating, are to be excom-
“ municated for breeding disturbance
“ in the house of God.” From whence
it is obvious to conclude, that in those
early times, it was singular and extra-
ordinary for any of the faithful to be
present at the holy mysteries, without
partaking of them, and that a non-
participation was construed into scan-
dalous disturbance.

St. Ignatius Martyr, the third bishop
of Antioch, in succession to St. Peter,
says in his fourteenth letter, “ Be
“ zealous, and approach frequently to
“ the holy communion, that glorious
“ mystery of divine power and love*.”

* *Festinate ergo frequenter accedere ad Eucha-
ristiam & gloriam Dei. S. Ign. Ep. 14. sub finem.*

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The philosopher and martyr St. Justin, who lived in the middle of the second century, writes as follows, in his second apology to the emperor Antoninus, * “On every Sunday or
“ Lord’s day, the Christians, both in
“ the towns and country villages,
“ assembled in one place of worship:
“ the Eucharist is given to every one
“ present, and is sent by deacons to
“ those who are absent.” We cannot well form a more lively idea than is here given us, of the zeal which animated the primitive pastors for the frequent distribution of the Eucharist, as it was universally extended to all those, whether present or absent, who professed the law of Christ. They assem-

* *Distributio & communicatio quæ fit eorum in quibus gratiæ actæ sunt cuique præsentī, absentibus per Diaconos Mittitur. Justin. Apol. 2 prope finem.*

bled indeed but once a week, which was owing to the persecutions they generally were under : however on the days of meeting, besides universal communion, there was a distribution made of the same heavenly bread, among the congregated members, which they carefully took home with them, and which during the week, when fasting, they received in private. Tertullian, among others, informs us of this, where he says, “* The daily bread “ which we ask for, is the body of “ Jesus Christ, which we wish to be “ always with us, and from which we “ are always unwilling to be separated.”

And elsewhere, the same Tertullian, dissuading his wife from marrying a heathen, should she become a widow, writes, “† The more pains you will

* Tertul. de Orat. Dom. c. 6.
Uxorem c. 5.

† Idem L. 1. ad

“ take to conceal yourself, the more
“ suspicious will you become to hea-
“ thenish curiosity: will you conceal
“ the sign of the cross, which you
“ make on your bed and on yourself?
“ and when you will have to rise in the
“ night time for prayer, will not your
“ husband discover what you secretly
“ eat, previously to any other food?
“ and, should he find it to be bread,
“ will he not suppose it to be that
“ bread which is spoken of?” Here
communion in former times, is repre-
sented to us as a custom, not less fre-
quent, than rising in the night to pray-
er. It was consecrated bread which
the above mentioned woman received
every morning, before she took any
other nourishment, and therefore it
evidently follows, that in the primi-
tive ages, private and daily commu-

nion was allowed of, encouraged, and universally practised.

To the testimony of Tertullian, I join that of Origen ; they were contemporaries in the third century. “ * If
“ we do not eat the bread of life, if we
“ do not nourish ourselves with the
“ flesh of Jesus Christ, if we drink
“ not his blood, if we slight our
“ Redeemer’s heavenly banquet, we
“ ought to reflect that, though God
“ is all-bounteous, he is equally just
“ and will punish us for our neglect.”
Here the words eating and nourishing seem sufficiently to indicate the frequent and constant use of the blessed Eucharist.

Eusebius of Cesarea, is still more explicit : “ † The priests indeed, by
“ their renewing EVERY DAY the me-

* Orig. hom. 88. in Luc.
Evang. L. 2. c. 10.

† Euseb. demonstr.

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“ mory of the body and blood of Jesus
“ Christ, are devoted to a sacrifice, and
“ to a ministry, which is by far more
“ excellent than that of the Old Tes-
“ tament.”

St. Cyprian, who also lived in the same century with the above mentioned fathers. “ * We pray that this bread
“ may be given us DAILY, lest we, who
“ actually live in Jesus Christ, from a
“ DAILY use of the Eucharist as a food
“ of salvation, should unfortunately,
“ through the perpetration of any
“ grievous offence, become unworthy
“ of this heavenly bread, and by this
“ means be separated, as unworthy

* Hunc panem dari nobis QUOTIDIE postulamus, ne qui Eucharistiam QUOTIDIE ad cibum salutis accipimus, intercedente graviori delicto, dum abstinentes & non communicantes a celesti pane prohibimur, a Christi corpore separemur. S. Cypr. Serm. de Orat. Dominica.

“ members, from the mystical body of
“ Christ.”

The Eastern perfectly agrees with
the African and primitive Church. St.
Chrysostom tells us, “ * He who is
“ free from mortal sin, may commu-
“ nicate DAILY. ^{But St.} The only grief of a ^{Chrysost.}
“ Christian is, to be deprived of this ^{says in}
“ heavenly nourishment.” And else- ^{another}
where, “ I mean to say all in one ^{place:}
“ word, which word is extremely im- ^{wherever}
“ portant as well as salutary. Neither ^{is not}
“ is it I, but the holy spirit, who ^{holy, let}
“ shall speak to you; several among ^{him not}
“ you partake of the holy mysteries ^{approach.}
“ but once a year; some twice, others ^{he saith,}
“ oftener: this concerns you all, as ^{not only}
“ well those who are present, as those ^{pure from}
“ who live in deserts: I neither ap- ^{sin, but}
“ prove of those who receive only once ^{also holy.} ^{Rom. 17} ^{in Heb.}

* Chrys. hom. 8. in Matth.

“nor of those who communicate
“oftener: but only of those who
“communicate with purity of con-
“science, let all such communicate
“constantly*.”

The same on the Epistle to Timothy.

“How, do you say, can these evils
“come upon us, for we receive this
“sacrament but once in a twelve-
“month? But it is from this very
“source that your misfortune takes its
“rise: you estimate your merit, not
“from purity of soul, but from the
“distance of time between your com-
“munion: and you fancy that you
“can shew no greater respect, nor
“pay greater homage to the sacrament,
“than by your unfrequent appearance
“at this heavenly table. There is no
“doubt, but one unworthy commu-

* Qui cum mundo corde, SEMPER accedant,
Chrys. hom. 17. Ep. ad. Hebr. circa medium.

“ nion, exposes us to eternal punish-
“ ment, whilst, on the contrary, we
“ secure our salvation by a worthy
“ reception, though our communi-
“ ons be most frequent. What motive
“ then should induce us to measure
“ our communions by the laws of
“ time? It is purity of heart that
“ should chiefly determine them : this
“ mystery is not greater or more re-
“ spectable at Easter, than at any
“ other season : it is at all times
“ the same, and at all times the
“ same victim.” This was the reason-
ing of the great Chrysostom ; from
whence I conclude, that he who is free
from sin, may communicate daily :
that the privation of this sacrament
should be the sole cause of grief in a
Christian : that recluses, and others,
who through respect, think proper to
abstain from it, are mistaken, and de-

luded : that purity of conscience should regulate our conduct in this particular : and finally, that unfrequent communion disturbs the Church, and produces every disorder.

St. Ambrose confirms this universal doctrine concerning communion.* “ If
“ the Eucharist be a daily bread, why
“ do you receive it but once a year?
“ Receive it **DAILY**, that it may profit
“ you **DAILY**.”

St. Jerom, that great luminary of the Eastern and Western churches, a man of genius, no less sublime than enlightened, in his letter to Lieinius, writes as follows : “ You ask whether
“ you should communicate **EVERY**
“ **DAY**, it being asserted, that such is
“ the practice of the churches of Rome,
“ and of Spain ; if your conscience be

* Si quotidianus panis, cur fumis post annum?
accipe **QUOTIDIE**, quod tibi profit **QUOTIDIE**. l. 5.
c. 4. de sacram.

“pure, receive the Eucharist daily,
“nor yet censure us: listen to the
“saying of the psalmist, *Taste and see*
“*how sweet the Lord is.*” * From the
above quotation it is clear, that in the
Roman and Spanish churches, daily
communion, was customary, and that
the saint’s advice to his friend, was in
favour of this custom, without how-
ever condemning the practice which in
those days prevailed in the East, of com-
municating but thrice a week, viz.
on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

The same doctor elsewhere informs
us, that the Christians in Rome, both
married and single, communicated
EVERY DAY not only during their
public assemblies, but frequently also
in private, and at their respective
homes †.

St. Hilarius, whose life and writings

* Epist. ad Licinium. † T. 1. Apol. c. 6. in
Jov. ad Pammachium Ep. 52.

adorn the Gallican church, accedes to the authority of the rest of the fathers. "Give us," he says, "our DAILY bread; God desires nothing more than that Jesus Christ should live daily in us: for he is the bread of life, the bread that is come down from heaven. And as this demand is a DAILY one, we therefore petition that it may be given us DAILY." The above words we find quoted in the Council of Toledo, from whence it is evident, that both the Spanish and Gallican churches were unanimous on the article of daily communion.

St. Augustin in his fifty-fourth letter to Januarius, says, "Some receive EVERY DAY the body and blood of our Lord; some receive him on certain days in the week: there are places in which no day passes with-

“ out offering ; and there are others,
“ where they only offer on Saturdays
“ and Sundays : from whence it is
“ proper to conclude, that these sort
“ of customs allow of a discretionary
“ liberty, and that a prudent discreet
“ Christian can follow no better rule,
“ than that which prevails in the
“ church where he is.”

The sole point in question here, relates only to different customs of different places, either of daily communion, or of communion but on some days in the week, both which he approves of, and determines the prevailing practice of every place, to be the best rule for the conduct of its respective inhabitants. But he all along supposes, that where communion does not prevail daily, it prevails at least oftener than once a week. He then continues to say, “ However,

“ where the sins committed are not so
 “ great, as to deserve excommunica-
 “ tion, no one should deprive himself
 “ of the DAILY remedy of the body
 “ of our Lord.” The same saint is
 still more explicit in his sermon to the
 newly christened. “ * It is your duty
 “ to know what you have received,
 “ what you do receive, and what you
 “ are to receive DAILY : the bread you
 “ see on the altar, being sanctified by
 “ the word of God, is the body of
 “ Jesus Christ.”

S. Bernard, one of the greatest orna-
 ments of the age he lived in, and the
 last on whom the title of father of the
 church was conferred, thus writes ;
 “ † He, who is wounded, seeks a
 “ remedy : we are wounded by sin,
 “ sin is a wound, for which the sa-

* Serm. 227. ad Infantes.

† Bern. Serm. in Cen. Dom.

“cramment of the Eucharist is the best
“remedy: receive it therefore DAILY,
“and you will meet with a DAILY
“cure.” And lower down in the
same sermon on the Lord’s Sup-
per, we read “The friends of the
“spouse, many worthy prelates and
“abbots, many pious and virtuous
“souls have relished, nay, and have
“made a thorough experiment of
“what I advance, and for this reason
“they MOST FREQUENTLY feed at the
“holy table.”

Antiquity therefore universally asserts
and teaches both frequent and daily
communion; the true oracles of reli-
gion clearly decide the question; the
most enlightened of the east and west
unanimously proclaim to the world,
that the Eucharist is the real and daily
bread of Christians.

And this doctrine was not only preached, but was also universally practised during the twelve first centuries. As to the five first, we can entertain no kind of doubt about it. S. Justin, S. Cyprian and Tertullian, bear witness in favour of the second and third century. S. Jerom, S. Chrysostom and S. Augustin, are vouchers for the fourth and fifth; and the rest of the fathers, including S. Bernard, sufficiently prove that the same practice prevailed in after ages. In former times, communion was given immediately after baptism. And we learn from S. Cyprian,* that even-sucking children partook of this sacrament; and both he and Tertullian inform us, that it was usual to offer up the sacrifice of the mass twice a day, morning and night.

* Cypr. de Lapsis. Tertul. de Corona, c. iii.

In times of persecution, when frequent meetings became dangerous, the faithful took home in baskets consecrated bread, and privately partook of this precious treasure. In consequence of this practice, we read in S. Cyprian, of a woman, who, being in the state of sin, went to open a box or basket, which contained the sacred body of our Lord, from whence a sudden flash of fire darting forth, greatly alarmed and terrified her.

Nicephorus, Gregory of Tours, and Evagrius*, inform us, that it was a prevailing custom in the church, frequently to give communion to people of all ages, not excepting children. And when the assembly was over, which was held on certain days in the

* Niceph. l. 17. c. xxv. Hist. Eccles. Greg. de Gloria Martyrum c. viii. Evagr. Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. xxxv.

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week for general communion, it was the practice of the Greek church, especially that of Constantinople, to call in from school those children who were fasting, among whom were distributed the consecrated fragments. Nicephorus tells us, that he himself had often been of the number, and adds the following memorable event.

A Jewish child, joining some of his companions who were going to communion, communicated also. His father, a glass-maker by trade, understanding what had passed, threw his child into a burning furnace. The mother, ignorant of her husband's cruelty, was inconsolable at the loss of her son. For the space of three days she was restless in the search of him, and wherever she went, joined to her sighs and sobs loud repetitions of his name. While in this distracted con-

dition, she chanced, on the third day, to be near the furnace, from whence the boy answered to her call : she heard, she flew, she opened it, and to her great astonishment found him as safe and well, as if he had been placed on a bed of roses : he said, that a lady of surprising beauty, had all along taken care of him, had given him necessary nourishment, and that by throwing water repeatedly on the fire, she at last had extinguished it. The emperor Justinian, at the earnest request of both the mother and son, gave orders for their baptism : while he sentenced to death the hard-hearted father, who persisted, to the last, in his obstinacy.

In the records of antiquity, we every where discover a peculiar attention in bishops in general, to promote among the faithful, fervor and devotion to holy communion : and every where do they

express even an anxious desire to have it decently preserved, and, as occasion offered, duly distributed. The first general council, held in the fourth century *, earnestly recommends the keeping of the Eucharist in public churches, that the wants of the faithful, whether sick or in health, may be readily supplied.

In the council of Tours we read †, that the body of our Lord is by no means to be ranked with church images, but reverently to be placed under the cross: and that during the month of August, mass was to be celebrated early in the morning; because in that month there were many holidays, on which all the faithful assisted at the holy sacrifice, which was appointed to be offered early in the day, that the harvest might not be neglected.

* Nicen. 1. c. 13. † An. 566.

Now it is well known, that in those days, mass was very seldom said any where, without communion on the part of every assistant.

The council of Auxerre * determines, that when women receive the body of our Lord, they must have on their Sunday's head-dress, or a linen veil; and that they are to put off receiving till the following Sunday, should they, through any accident, come unprovided with it.

St. Isidore, a Spanish bishop, who died in the seventh century †, compiled minutely the ceremonies of the Mozorabic mass for every day, and determined the method of saying it during the different seasons of the year; among many remarkable things contained in this work, we find that when

* An. 636. † *Ibid.*

the priest reciting the Lord's prayer, had pronounced these words, *give us this day our daily bread*, the clerk made answer, *which is no other than thyself, O Jesus Christ*. From whence it is obvious, that in the seventh century, the Eucharist was looked upon as the daily bread of the faithful.

Near the end of the same century St. Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, died in England. He was the first among the Latins who composed a penitential book, in which he observes, that the laity among the Greeks communicated every Sunday, and that those who absented themselves from the holy table three Sundays following, received sentence of excommunication.

During the eighth century, Theodulphus, bishop of Orleans *, in his in-

* An. 786.

structions to his priests, chapter the fourth, expresses himself thus: "All, who are not under excommunication, are to receive the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ every Sunday in Lent, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in holy week, and also on Easter Sunday. The whole week of Easter is to be solemnized as on Easter-day. For as it is dangerous to approach this sacrament unworthily, so also is it dangerous to abstain from it for any time; excepting those who, being excommunicated, do not communicate at pleasure, but only at certain times; excepting also many pious persons, who communicate almost DAILY."

We read in the fourth council of Tours, which was held in the ninth

century*, that "The laity were under
" strict precept of communicating three
" times a year. And the priests were
" forbidden to distribute at the end
" of mass, the body of our Lord indi-
" scriminately to children, and to every
" one who presented himself, lest
" some should receive in the state of
" sin." From whence we cannot but
conclude, that the then prevailing cus-
tom among the faithful was, to com-
municate when the mass was over, at
which they had assisted.

The tenth and eleventh centuries
abounded with churches throughout
the Christian world, and their respec-
tive priests increased in proportion.
Many abbeys were founded, in Hun-
gary, by St. Stephen king, in France
by king Robert, and in Germany by

* An. 813.

St. Henry emperor: the abbey of Cluny was instituted by Bernon, who was its first abbot; and the bishops St. Dunstan, in England: St. Boniface, in Germany; St. Adalbert, in Bohemia, universally set the example of frequent communion, and zealously enforced it in the respective monasteries, dioceses, kingdoms, and empires in which they lived.

From the above proofs I mean to infer, that the doctrine of frequent, and even daily communion, is a most constant, clear, and general tradition of all churches; that it has been invariably and universally practised by all good Christians; that this practice was formerly more prevalent than it is in our days; that the apostles, bishops, priests and deacons, carried the Eucharist about with them to Christian dwelling-houses, and to prisons; that the

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faithful kept it at their respective homes, and took with them in their travels, this sacred depositum ; and therefore, that the assertion is false, which denies that frequent communion was not universally taught, encouraged, and practised during the ten first centuries of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

The Doctrine and Practice of the leading scholastic Doctors, concerning this subject.

FROM the authority of the fathers of the Church, I proceed to that of her scholastic doctors, who, for their profound learning, and pious erudition, deservedly attracted the attention, and excited the admiration of the

ages they lived in, and still continue forcibly to claim the respect and veneration of succeeding generations. It cannot but be productive of a heart-felt joy in the breast of every true follower of Christ, to behold this most respectable body of men, made up of the most improved, refined, and brightest geniuses, unison in their language, unanimous in their sentiments, and invincible in their arguments in support of the propriety, excellency, and advantage of frequent communion.

I begin with St. Thomas, who moves the following question : “ * Is it lawful to communicate EVERY DAY ? ” I answer, “ that, on account of the virtue and efficacy of this sacrament, it is advantageous to receive DAILY.” He then quotes St Ambrose, as quoted

* S Tho. Sum.

in the preceding chapter, when speaking of one who receives this sacrament, he says, "If he be prepared to receive every day, it is extremely laudable that he should." He then proceeds to the solution of the following objections: Baptism is administered but once: the Paschal Lamb was eaten but once in a year: the Centurion pleased our Lord, when, through respect, he entreated him to forbear coming under his roof. "Baptism he owns, which is the sacrament of our spiritual regeneration, is not reiterated, because we are born but once; whereas the Eucharist, which is the spiritual nourishment of our souls, is taken DAILY, as we do the material nourishment of our bodies." To the second objection he replies, "The Paschal Lamb, figure of the passion of Jesus Christ, and of this

* sacrament, was eaten but once a
“ year ; but the Eucharist is a memo-
“ rial of the passion by way of nourish-
“ ment, and nourishment must be
“ FREQUENT.”

To the third objection he answers,
“ The Centurion, through respect,
“ was unwilling that Jesus Christ
“ should enter his roof ; Zaccheus, on
“ the contrary, received him with joy :
“ they both honoured our Lord, the
“ one by his respect, the other by his
“ love : but love, joined to confidence,
“ is preferable to timidity and fear ;
“ almost every where in scripture, we
“ are exhorted to confidence and love.”
“ Next to St. Thomas, I place the
seraphic Doctor Bonaventure, who
writes, “ * It must be said, that if you
“ be in the state of the primitive

* S. Bon. T. 1. de exam. Doctr.

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“ Church, (that is in the state of
“ grace) your DAILY communion is
“ praise worthy and commendable.”
And elsewhere; “ * He who ALWAYS
“ is prepared, ALWAYS receives this
“ sacrament to advantage : wherefore
“ the primitive Christians received
“ EVERY DAY, because they were
“ holy.” The holiness which is here
alluded to, is no other than the
actual state of grace. We read in
the works of the same saint, “ † It
“ is beneficial and salutary to a Chris-
“ tian soul to prepare herself for the
“ FREQUENT use of this remedy : and
“ though there should be a degree or
“ coldness or tepidity, she, confident
“ in God’s mercy, should not refrain
“ from it : for you unite not yourself
“ to Jesus Christ, that you may sanc-

Id. in 4. Distinct. 12. † De prof. Relig. l. 2.
c. penult.

“ tify him, but that he may sanctify
“ you : communion therefore is not to
“ be omitted, though we should be
“ deprived of all sensible devotion.”

I place this saint at the head of the whole order of St. Francis, and of the innumerable list of doctors and other teachers, who have distinguished, and continue to distinguish themselves for their zeal in asserting frequent communion.

Father Cyprien of the Nativity, of the order of Carmelites, has translated a Spanish book, the drift of which is, to ascertain daily communion. He in particular observes, that it is the birth-right of children to sit daily at their father's table : in support of this right, he urges the authority of the fathers, the arguments of the scholastics, and the example of the saints, and proves that nothing but a mortal blemish on

the soul, can deprive her of her privilege.

Denis, the Carthusian, and Molina, a Carthusian also of Spain, have written on the same subject, and both decide in favour of frequent, and even daily communion : the testimony of these two alone, sufficiently determines the sense of that holy order at large, which, to this day, universally keep up the practice of daily communion.

The order of our Lady of Mercy, is not inferior to any other in doctors, who have published valuable and perfect treatises on frequent communion. Witness the celebrated Villa-Roel, a Spaniard, and the great Falconi, author of the book entitled, *Our Daily Bread*. This production is a master-piece for the force and energy of his arguments, which strongly prove the Eucharist to be truly and properly the daily bread of

Christians, nor is the sweetness and delicacy of his style, which particularly characterizes the author, inferior in any degree to the strength of his reasoning.

I cannot omit Father Giry Provincial in the order of Minims, who, in a discourse on the feast of the blessed Eucharist, displays the greatest zeal and erudition in favor of frequent communion. He alledges the custom of the primitive Christians, the opinion of the ancient fathers, of the doctors and saints, and particularly of the learned Taulerus, and the pious Blossius, the latter he quotes in the following manner : “ * A great and sensible
“ devotion, is by no means requisite
“ for frequent communion. Let no
“ one therefore, under pretence of any
“ small fault or failure, with-draw him-

*Blos. l. de Sacram. c. 6.

“ self from the benefit of the holy
 “ Eucharist ; but, on the contrary, let
 “ him who is weak and imperfect be
 “ of good heart, and go to this holy
 “ table with joy and with love.”

· Suarez, a divine, no less holy than
 learned, treats this subject with equal
 piety and precision : “ * It is not for-
 “ bidden by any law either human
 “ or divine, to communicate **EVERY**
 “ **DAY.** Daily communion was prac-
 “ tised in primitive times, and at all
 “ times *frequent* communion, being
 “ consonant with the unanimous sen-
 “ timent of divines, ought to be re-
 “ commended and encouraged.” He
 then in support of his assertion, brings
 in the testimony of the fathers ; and
 adds, “ A worthy communion is,
 “ in itself, a commendable action,

* T. 3. Disp. 79. sect. 3. Disp. 63. sect. 3.

“ but it cannot be commendable to
“ refrain from it: a frequent recep-
“ tion of this sacrament, originates
“ from charity as from its basis and
“ principle, whilst fear or negligence
“ must actuate those who absent from
“ it: and as there is no doubt but
“ the work of charity greatly excels
“ the influence of fear, it is equally
“ true, that a *FREQUENT* commu-
“ nicant greatly surpasses another,
“ who is not so assiduous: the re-
“ peated fruits and advantages which
“ accrue to him from the sacrament,
“ decide the superiority, exclusive of
“ other personal merits which may
“ level him with, or raise him above
“ the fearful or indolent Christian.”

Cardinal Toletus, in the instruction he gives to priests, and in the nineteenth chapter of his sixth book on frequent communion, forcibly proves

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it to be equally laudable and beneficial.
“ As it is the food of the soul, the
“ use of it of course, should be com-
“ mon and habitual. We also con-
“ stantly stand in need of it : for it is
“ instituted for the remission of venial
“ sins, the commission of which slackens
“ and diminishes charity ; it is also in-
“ tended as a preservative against mor-
“ tal sin ; man frequently falls into the
“ former, and is DAILY exposed to the
“ danger of the latter ; the remedy
“ therefore to the one, and the fence
“ against the other should be in con-
“ stant use. We know from experi-
“ ence, that many, from a vicious
“ and dissolute course, have, by means
“ of FREQUENT communion, so re-
“ formed their conduct and manners,
“ as either to sin no more, or very
“ little, the remainder of their lives.”

I say nothing of the great Petavius, who, to this day, attracts an eye of admiration, even from the most learned, and who has particularly distinguished himself by his conclusive refutation of the famous Arnould, who stood up against frequent communion ; and shall pass to Algerius, a Benedictin monk of the order of Cluny, one of the most celebrated men of his age, and a most zealous defender of the Eucharist in the twelfth century. The opinion of this learned writer, relative to our present subject, will sufficiently establish the general sense and doctrine of his respectable order.

“ * Although the oblation of Jesus
“ Christ on the cross was made only
“ once for the salvation and redemp-
“ tion of all, nevertheless, this same

* Alger. l. i. de Sacram. Euch. c. 16.

“ oblation is DAILY necessary, in order
“ to comfort man and strengthen him,
“ in his frailty, whereby he falls daily,
“ and is tempted to sin mortally, or
“ venally at least and we, with
“ the help of this victim, obtain not
“ only the remission of our sins, but
“ also shelter and protection from
“ every temptation. For when the
“ enemy of our happiness observes,
“ that, from a participation of this
“ incomparable mystery, the avenue
“ of our heart is taken up with the
“ splendor and majesty of the King of
“ heaven, and that Jesus Christ has
“ his abode within us, he speedily
“ withdraws, and readily is put to
“ flight.”

The same Author, in the twenty-second chapter of the same book, adds:
“ But if it be dangerous to receive, or
“ not to receive this heavenly medi-

“ cine, what is to become of us?
“ Let no human infirmity despair,
“ though encompassed with so many
“ difficulties : S. Augustin opportunely
“ comes to our assistance : he leaves to
“ every one’s option, either to receive
“ EVERY DAY, or only several times
“ in the week ; although to abstain a
“ long while from the Eucharist, is
“ doubtless, a great detriment to sal-
“ vation, whether our motive proceeds
“ from an obstinate attachment to our
“ own opinion, or from carelessness
“ and neglect of this sacrament. St.
“ Hilarius, compassionating on this
“ occasion, the weakness of the im-
“ perfect and of beginners, gives them
“ the following counsel; let no one
“ be diffident of God’s grace ; but he
“ who has left off sinning, let him
“ not leave off communicating.”

To the above authorities, I join those of several learned and holy French divines, such as Gerson, Bail, Isambert, Duval and Gamache. Gerson, who was chancellor of the university of Paris, and much famed for his numerous works of piety, in his Preparation for Mass, says, "The sacraments are remedies, the sick and infirm approach to Jesus Christ, and provided that you are free from mortal sin, go to him VERY OFTEN: the man who comes to this table cold and wanting in devotion, returns from it refreshed and fervorous." And in his ninth Treatise on the *Magnificat*, he says, "Considering the effects of this sacrament, it is much more commendable to receive it often through love, and with confidence in the mercies of God, than to excommunicate one's

“ self from it in some measure,
“ through fear and scruple ;” and further on, “ The fear and respect which
“ with-holds us from the Lord who
“ calls and invites us to come to him,
“ is unreasonable and even foolish.”

Bail also, a doctor of Paris, and subpenitentiary of the cathedral, expresses himself as follows* : “ If directors of souls are not very prudent,
“ they may here easily fall into a mistake, by rashly with-holding their
“ penitents from FREQUENT communion, the fruits of which are by far
“ greater and more numerous than it
“ is possible to express or even to conceive.” And elsewhere he adds :
“ Too great an interval between one
“ communion and the other is extremely dangerous, because most

* De Tripl. Exam. p. 3. q. 8,

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“commonly, it is fruitless: that re-
“spect, which so long separates us
“from God, is neither right nor
“commendable: it should not with-
“draw us from, but excite us to go
“and be united to him. If then direc-
“tors are not on their guard, they
“may err much, and grievously offend
“God by keeping souls back from
“the sacrifice of the Lord.”

He then quotes several of the holy fathers, who condemn a long absence from communion, and S. Augustin in particular, who would have it left to every one's option of communicating daily: and concludes with the opinion of Mathias Hauzeur: “All Christians
“who are not rendered unworthy by
“mortal sin, have received a right
“from Jesus Christ and his church
“of communicating DAILY: this
“right is derived to them from the

“sacrifice at which they are present.

“To dissuade one from communion,

“on account of a bad conscience, is

“a very different thing from that

“usurped authority which most indis-

“creetly and tyrannically deprives the

“faithful of this their divine right.”

It seems however to be a prevailing sentiment among divines in general, that when time and circumstances will admit of a delay, a great sinner, tho' absolved from his sins, should for a while be deprived of communion, but this restriction should in prudence be confined to a short space of very few days. Isambert and Duval agree in sentiment and expression with the above doctors, quotations therefore from them may be deemed superfluous: but I cannot conclude this chapter without strengthening the argument of it by the weighty suffrages of two very

celebrated names, S. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, and the great Fenelon, archbishop of Cambray: the former was a bright ornament to the justly renowned order of Benedictin monks, and one of the most learned primates England ever saw. From his excellent treatise on the Sacrament of the Altar, I shall select only a few words, which however, contain in substance the scope and conclusion of the whole work. “ *He who loves God most, eats oftenest of this food, and reciprocally, the oftener he eats this food, the greater is his love.”

The latter mentioned prelate was a man whose sublime genius and deep penetration, whose singular talents, erudition and piety, will ensure him

* Hunc cibum plus manducat, qui plus amat: & rursus qui & plus manducat, plus et amat, l. 5. de Sacram. Altaris.

the love and admiration of the latest posterity. The beauty and solidity of his writings, but particularly his most amiable virtues, which, with equal energy and tenderness of devotion beam from every line, will ever exhibit him to view in the fairest and brightest colours; and if, in his treatise on the maxims of the saints, a single shade of human fallibility intervened, which, for a moment, rendered so great a character less conspicuous, the apparent blemish, originating from an excess of charity and inattention, was presently removed by his exemplary submission, which added more lustre to every shining virtue he possessed, than if he had never given proof, in one instance of his life, that he, like every other individual, was liable to mistakes. This illustrious author, in his book on Frequent Communion, writes in the

following manner: "The case in
" question is, of a Christian whose
" conscience is pure, whose conduct
" is regular, and who sincerely and
" candidly submits himself to a dis-
" creet and prudent director: this
" Christian, in himself languid and
" weak, avails himself, for support
" and vigour, of the celestial manna:
" he is imperfect, but his imperfec-
" tions displease him, and therefore
" he takes pains to remove them. I
" say, that a truly good and wise direc-
" tor may and ought to induce him
" to almost DAILY communion: for
" we are taught by the fathers, that
" the Eucharist is our DAILY bread;
" that Jesus Christ gives himself to
" man under the appearance of bread,
" a food, which with man is the most
" in use, that man may become ac-
" customed to his resuscitated and glo-

“ rious body. The institution also of
“ this sacrament, as tradition explains
“ it to us, strongly invites us to it.
“ The Christians of early times, and
“ even such as were immediately un-
“ der the care and inspection of the
“ apostles, were not free from im-
“ perfections, yet all were unanimous
“ in frequently breaking bread : the
“ good therefore and virtuous of our
“ days, may, at their example, be con-
“ stant in the same daily practice, and
“ thus strive at an amendment of their
“ faults. Those are mistaken in the
“ honor which they would pay to this
“ sacrament, when through respect,
“ they but rarely receive it. S. Chry-
“ sostom confutes and condemns
“ them.”

After having shewn, in eleven arti-
cles, the tradition of the fathers and
of the councils on this subject, he

concludes : “ Behold the church which
“ at all times, is the same, ever true
“ and invariable in the purity of her
“ doctrine, and unsusceptible of decay
“ from any series of ages. The same
“ spirit which guided and animated
“ her, when in her bosom she nursed
“ S. Justin and other holy men, di-
“ rects and impels her now to hold
“ the same language : to this day her
“ exhortations to all her children to-
“ wards FREQUENT communion, are
“ equally pressing and spirited. The
“ Christians, in former times of per-
“ secution, communicated in their own
“ houses, and with their own hands,
“ that they might not be deprived of
“ DAILY communion. These latter
“ are not less dangerous and insidious,
“ our common enemy is always awake,
“ and aims at seduction by the venom
“ of pride and luxury. Refined irre-

“ligion, pleasing and insinuating illu-
“sions, and deep hypocrisy, which, can-
“cer-like, widely diffuse themselves,
“are more formidable obstacles to vir-
“tue, than racks and tortures.

“Communicate therefore, as the
“apostles made the primitive Christians
“communicate, and as the fathers of
“the church caused to communicate
“the faithful of succeeding ages. Let
“those talk as they please, who are
“ever upon the reform, as to you,
“continue to eat this DAILY bread.
“Take your information and form
“your judgment, not from a set of
“pretended reformers, who are always
“taking scandal at, and labouring at
“criticism on every subject, but from
“your lawful pastors, and from a dis-
“creet experienced director, who will
“lead you to the sense and meaning

“ of the church, and guide you in
“ the path in which formerly walked
“ the best and wisest of your fore-fa-
“ thers.”

Can we therefore hesitate any longer to assert that, the doctors of every school, age and country, who were in any degree eminent for their piety and learning, have methodically entered upon, and invincibly proved the excellency and advantage of Frequent Communion ?

CHAPTER. VII.

Decisions of Councils both general and particular, on frequent Communion.

It must be allowed that every individual, though endowed with the keenest penetration, the greatest erudi-

tion, and the purest intentions, may possibly be mistaken in his decisions and go astray in his judgment. We therefore stand in need of a living infallible guide, who, incapable of being deceived, as well as of deceiving, should banish, by his supreme authority, every doubt, remove every difficulty, and ultimately fix our fluctuating minds on what he decisively determines to be truth. The discovery of a guide like this, is the business of the present moment.

Holy scripture, no doubt, is the written word of God, but being what is called, a dead word, it does not, and cannot explain itself. There is therefore a necessity for an infallible living interpreter, whose unerring knowledge should mark and direct the true and real sense of it.

Tradition, the unwritten word of God, demands in like manner an additional testimony of its having originated from above, which testimony, unless infallible, would prove ineffectual.

The unanimous opinion of doctors, although weighty and persuasive, yields not however that absolute and perfect satisfaction, to which the human mind naturally inclines, and strongly wishes finally to acquiesce. They are in the cause of religion, like able and eminent lawyers in civil debates ; they are not judges, at least not infallible in their decisions. They may with the utmost propriety give advice, which, in general, to oppose, would be rash and inconsiderate ; but they cannot ultimately determine, or pronounce a definitive sentence. This singular and eminent prerogative is peculiar to the

Church of Christ, composed of her leading pastors, in concert with the Pope at their head; for Jesus Christ has invested them, and them alone, with the unerring faculty and power of teaching all truth: *Go*, he says to his apostles*, and in them to their successors, *go teach ye all nations, he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not, shall be condemned.* I will send you the Holy Ghost, *who will teach you all truth, and behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.* *He that doth not hear the church let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.*

From which we are to infer, that a promise is here made of an absolute and independent infallibility, and that we are to listen to Christ's church, as

* Matth. xxviii. 19. Mark. xvi. 16. John. xiv. 13. Matth. xviii. 20: Ibid. xviii. 17.

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to Christ himself: * *he that heareth you heareth me.* That it is a sovereign infallibility ; our salvation rests on our belief, the want of which seals our condemnation. That it is an universal infallibility extending to all religious matters, *all truth.* That it is a continued and an uninterrupted infallibility, *I am with you all days* ; that it is a perpetual infallibility, *to the consummation of the world.* The church is founded on a solid rock, *and the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.* The church therefore, is that supreme and sovereign tribunal, which Jesus Christ has established to decide and determine with absolute and infallible authority, all points of religious worship, of which it is he who speaks, as often as his church speaks ; let us now exa-

† Luke. x. 16.

mine the decision of this church, in relation to Frequent Communion.

In the decree of the Council of Trent, at the beginning of the thirteenth session, we cannot but admire the awful majesty with which this assembled church enters upon the subject, and the becoming dignity which she assumes as the mother and mistress of all churches.

“The most holy and general council of Trent, peculiarly convened through the influence of the Holy Ghost, and presided over by the legate and the nuncios of the holy apostolic see, although assembled with the view to explain the true and ancient doctrine on faith and on the sacraments, and to apply a proper remedy against all heresies has however, all along, paid particular attention to the extirpation of

“ the cockle of those schisms and
“ errors which the enemy has over-
“ sowed on the doctrine, the use
“ and on the worship of the holy
“ Eucharist, which our Lord has left
“ to his Church, as the symbol of union
“ and of charity.

“ Wherefore the said holy council
“ transmitting and teaching the same
“ sound and pure doctrine concern-
“ ing the venerable sacrament of the
“ Eucharist, which the Church, ever
“ Catholic, has learned from the
“ mouth of Jesus Christ, and of his
“ apostles, and which she continues
“ to learn from the Holy Ghost who
“ daily teaches her all truth, which
“ truth she preserves, and will con-
“ tinue to preserve to the end of the
“ world ; this same council forbids,
“ and prohibits among the faithful,
“ both teaching and preaching on the

“ most holy Eucharist in any other
“ manner, than is explained and de-
“ fined in the present decree.” In the
eighth chapter of the above mentioned
session, the title of which is, *On the
Use of the most admirable Sacrament of
the Eucharist*, we read: “ This holy
“ council, with a truly paternal af-
“ fection, admonishes, exhorts, en-
“ treats, and, through the bowels of
“ God’s mercy, conjures all and every
“ one of those who bear the name of a
“ Christian, finally to unite in the
“ bonds of charity, and being con-
“ stantly mindful of the infinite ma-
“ jesty, and extreme love of Jesus
“ Christ, who has given his life in
“ ransom for our salvation, together
“ with his flesh for our food, they
“ would believe and reverence these
“ sacred mysteries of his body and
“ blood with such steadiness and firm-

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“ness of faith, such devotion, piety
“and religious comportment, as may
“induce and dispose them FREQUENT-
“LY to receive this bread, which is
“above all substance, that it may
“truly become the life of their soul,
“and the continual fervor of their
“mind, and thus strengthened and
“invigorated, they may safely pass
“through the temptations of this
“earthly pilgrimage, to the repose of
“their heavenly country.”

From which words I infer, that the meaning of the council is, to persuade all in general, and every one in particular, to frequent communion: that frequent communion is held out as a sign of our being Christians, and pointed at as the fairest symbol of our union and charity: and that the infinite majesty and excessive love of Jesus Christ, should so impress the mind of every

Christian, as to move and intice him to communicate often. The idea therefore of supreme Majesty, is not, in the opinion of the council, to with-hold us from, but draw us to communion. And lastly, that frequent communion should be the result of the firmness or our faith, the fruit of our piety, and the effect of our religion, from whence shall flow spiritual life, preserved and invigorated with every help, suitable and conducive to the possession of that happy state, where we shall behold unveiled, and face to face, the now hidden object of our adoration, and the life-giving manna of our souls.

In the second chapter of the same decree, the said council makes use of three particular expressions, the obvious meaning of which, favors, in the clearest manner, even daily communion. "Our Lord, upon leaving this world, to

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“ return to his Father, instituted this
“ sacrament, in which he has wonder-
“ fully displayed the treasures of his
“ divine love for man, and in the re-
“ ception of it, he has commanded
“ that his memory should be honored,
“ and his death continually announced
“ until he comes to judge mankind.”

Now as this command is always in force, and is uninterruptedly to be complied with, it consequently follows, that communion also must be uninterrupted, and of course, should be daily. The council adds, “That this sacrament should be considered as the
“ spiritual food and strength to our
“ souls.” And we know that food and refreshment must be taken daily. Lastly, in the opinion of the council,
“ This sacrament is to be received as an
“ antidote which at once frees us from
“ daily commissions, and preserves us

“ against grievous offences.”* Now a remedy like this, should doubtless be daily, because our slight transgressions being daily, we stand in need of a repeated forgiveness, and our misery is such, that we are in daily want of a powerful preservative from more weighty commissions. And elsewhere, “ The
“ sacred council could wish that, in
“ every mass, at which the faithful
“ assisted, they all did communicate,
“ not only spiritually and in desire,
“ but also really by a sacramental reception, the advantages of which
“ would be more copious and lasting.”†

* Summi autem voluit sacramentum hoc tanquam spiritualium animarum cibum, quo alantur & confortentur: & tanquam antidotum quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis, & peccatis mortalibus preservemur. c. 2. se ss. 13.

† Optaret sancta Synodus ut in singulis Missis fideles adstantes non solum spirituali affectu, sed sacramentali etiam Eucharistiæ perceptione communicarent. c. 6. sess. 22.

Perfectly consonant with the sense of the universal Church was St. Charles Borromeus, in the provincial councils, which, on different occasions, he held at Milan. He speaks thus, “* Let
 “ curates and preachers, incessantly
 “ exhort the faithful to the most salu-
 “ tary custom of FREQUENTLY receiv-
 “ ing the holy Eucharist, urging the
 “ example and practice of the primitive
 “ Church, the words and testimony of
 “ the holy fathers, and the unanimous
 “ sense of the sacred council of Trent,
 “ who recommends communion at
 “ every mass: and should any preacher;
 “ either directly or indirectly, advance
 “ an opinion which might take from,
 “ oppose, or invalidate this doctrine,
 “ the bishops of the town or diocese
 “ of the delinquent, must interdict him

* Council. Medial. c. 3. a. 7. De Eucharist.

“ as a sower of scandal, and an opposer
“ to the authority of the council of
“ Trent.” And in the first council of
Milan, he had said before; “ Let
“ curates, by their repeated exhorta-
“ tions, strenuously labour that the
“ faithful, entrusted to their care, may
“ FREQUENTLY go to confession and
“ to communion.” We read also in
the fourth council, “ Let every curate,
“ both by exhorting his parishioners
“ to frequent the sacraments, and by
“ repeated instructions and admoni-
“ tions, endeavour to renew the cus-
“ tom established by Pope St. Silverius,
“ importing that, those who in the
“ course of the year, do not communi-
“ cate OFTEN, shall receive every Sun-
“ day, during Advent and Lent, the
“ body of Jesus christ.” And lower
down: “ When communion is dis-
“ tributed to a concourse of people,
“ the bishops, either in person, or by

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“ the help of others, are to be particu-
“ larly attentive that the faithful, at
“ that favorable juncture, be properly
“ animated to fervor and devotion, by
“ frequent and fervid acts of virtue,
“ and by pathetic exhortations, which,
“ like so many fiery darts, may spirit
“ them on to **FREQUENT** communion.
“ Let them also be made sensible how
“ dangerous and pernicious it is to
“ receive unworthily, and yet how
“ profitable, if worthily, to communi-
“ cate *OFTEN*. Lastly, let no curate
“ deprive the sick, who should desire
“ it, of *FREQUENT* communion, al-
“ though they should not be in danger
“ of death ; the comfort arising from
“ a repetition of this heavenly food is
“ too great, and the emoluments ac-
“ cruing from it, are by far too desira-
“ ble, to authorize a non-compliance
“ on the part of the pastor.”

We find in the council of Reims, which was held in 1583, “As the
“ Christian religion contains nothing
“ that is equal in dignity and excel-
“ lence to the most adorable sacrament
“ of the Eucharist, and as there is
“ nothing so efficaciously conducive to
“ a virtuous and holy life, as a MOST
“ FREQUENT participation of this hea-
“ venly banquet, it is a motive of
“ grief and anguish to us to find that
“ such, in these days, is the negligence
“ and inattention of Christians, as to
“ content themselves with a bare an-
“ nual assistance from this most salu-
“ tary sacrament. Let curates therefore
“ and preachers, strongly inculcate the
“ ancient and commendable custom of
“ FREQUENT communion; let them
“ enlarge upon and display the most
“ admirable fruits and innumerable
“ advantages, which inevitably must

“ flow from it : in fine, let them exert
“ every power of speech, to persuade
“ their flock, that there are no means
“ better calculated, no method more
“ compendious to quell and even ex-
“ tinguish the raging fire of heresy,
“ and universally to revive throughout
“ the Christain world, the purity of
“ religion, the fervorous zeal, and
“ every endearing virtue of primitive
“ times.” And farther on : “ We
“ also earnestly exhort all the faithful,
“ and conjure them, through the
“ bowels of God’s great mercy, to
“ communicate as OFTEN as it lies in
“ their power, especially on solemn and
“ festival days, and whenever any
“ pressing necessity shall make it ex-
“ pedient.”

In the year 1590, a council was held
at Toulouse ; in which we read :

“ *The curates, preachers, and directors must persuade the faithful, by means of repeated exhortations, to MOST FREQUENT communion.”
And in 1624, the bishops of the council of Bourdeaux say : “ † We wish most ardently, that the faithful communicated MOST FREQUENTLY ; and that, with the greatest devotion.”

From the preceding quotations I conclude, that the congregated fathers of the above councils express, in the strongest terms, their esteem for frequent communion, and their eagerness for establishing and preserving it. In their language, it is the great treasure of our holy religion : it is the best and shortest road to the practice of every virtue, it extirpates heresy, and the efficacy of it is such, as would infal-

* Concil. Tolet. c. 5. de. Euchar. † Concil. Burdigal. c. 5. a. 3. de. Euchar.

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libly renew those days of primitive fervor, which the apostles once formed and perfected. Nor are their exhortations confined to a few in the Christian world : they speak to all and every one of that denomination, and they most pressinglly invite and persuade all to
MOST FREQUENT COMMUNION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Decisions and Regulations of sovereign Pontiffs, through a Succession of Ages concerning frequent Communion.

Our Lord made a promise to Peter, that no deficiency should attend his faith ; that it should become his charge to confirm his brethren in the faith : that the infant Church should be erected on Peter, who should teach no

other doctrine than that of his Master. We are now going to see that the apostolical tradition, relative to frequent communion, has been uninterruptedly and invariable handed down to us in a long succession of many ages ; we shall hear the mother and mistress of all churches, at the example of her heavenly spouse, loudly proclaiming, and cogently enforcing daily, or at least, most frequent communion : all the sovereign pontiffs shall speak on the occasion, and their unanimous voice, which has spread itself to the remotest parts of the globe, in favour of this subject, will be a confirmation to our faith, when we behold, that the living oracles of religious matters, the common fathers of the faithful, the visible heads of the church, and the vicars of Jesus Christ, have successively

spoken on frequent communion, in the language of their divine Master.

St. Peter, in the same words, in which he acknowledged the divinity of the Son of God, acknowledged also that he admitted the doctrine concerning the frequent use of the blessed Eucharist, which he believed to be productive of life and immortality : for when our Redeemer had miraculously multiplied the five loaves, and had declared, that he would give to the world a bread from heaven, which should be his own flesh, as their food and nourishment, several of his disciples, taking offence, retired and left him. Jesus then addressing his twelve disciples, asked, * *Will you also go away?* *Lord*, answered Simon Peter in the name of all, *to whom shall we go, thou*

*John vi. 68.

hast the words of eternal life. That is, in the interpretation of St. Augustin *, life everlasting is only attainable by a belief in your words : we believe all you have delivered to us concerning this heavenly food, we acknowledge your wisdom and power with which you can place your body in the Eucharist, and trust in your goodness, that you will make it our nourishment. It was upon this occasion, that Peter, for the first time, declared to his Master and to all then present, that he would undertake to preach the doctrine of the Eucharist, and that, as head-pastor, he would, with this food, feed the lambs and the sheep, which Jesus Christ was to commit to his care. He entered upon this function immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost : and

* Aug. Tract. 27. in Joan.

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the first lesson he read to the newly baptized Christians, was to teach them the expediency of daily communion. They were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, which was their daily custom*.

S. Anacletus, the fifth Pope from S. Peter, writes in his letter to the bishops of Italy : “ After consecration, “ let all communicate ; and those who “ refuse compliance, let them be for- “ bidden the church : for such is the “ apostolical statute, and such is the doctrine of the holy Roman church†.”

* Acts, ii. 42.

† Peractâ consecratione, omnes communicent ; qui noluerint, ecclesiasticis carere liminibus ; sic enim apostoli statuerunt, & sancta Romana tenet ecclesia. Quem citat S. Thom. 2. p. 2. 80. a. 10.

Although from the earliest period of the church frequent communion had been strictly enjoined by apostolical mandate, including excommunication on the transgressors; it was found, in course of time, that this primitive fervor relented among some Christians, whilst among others the obligation itself was, either falling into oblivion, or was totally neglected. To obviate so great an evil, Pope St. Fabian determined and reduced the above precept to three different periods in the year, Easter, Whitsuntide and Christmas, yet warmly exhorting and strongly soliciting every one of the faithful to present himself much more frequently to the sacred table; to the three mentioned times of obligatory communion, St. Soter added Monday-Thursday.

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But as charity among several still continued on the decline, and as there were Christians to be found who, for years had absented from communion, Innocent III. confined the obligation of it to Easter, annexing on the delinquents expulsion from the church during their life-time, and privation of Christian burial at their death*.

From these pontifical ordinances it cannot be inferred that frequent communion was then in the least opposed, or not approved of: on the contrary, those pious pontiffs greatly wished for it, and even supposed that every good Christian communicated often. The words, *if not oftener, at least* once in the year, sufficiently shew their meaning. The question no ways related to frequent communion, but

* Concil. Later. Sess. 13.

solely to unfrequent communions, at which they grieved, and against which they thundered out the severest excommunication.

During the five first centuries, St. Jerom and St. Augustin inform us, that the faithful communicated daily, not only with the knowledge and approbation, but also through the exhortations of every sovereign pontiff. Their chief solicitude was to feed their flock with this heavenly nourishment : the strongest persecutions did not abate their zeal on this head ; and if the rage of their enemies prevented their pious assemblies during the day, the night favoured their devotion in subterraneous vaults, where mass was constantly celebrated, and communion carefully distributed. S. Stephen Pope, let no day pass without offering the immaculate lamb, and was gifted with

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the palm of martyrdom, whilst actually engaged in that most sacred of all functions. We know from ecclesiastical history, that all the Popes of the five first centuries, most of whom were also martyrs, ordained many bishops and priests, with the view to multiply every where the sacrifice of the altar, and to facilitate the distribution of the Eucharist in every part of the Christian world.

In the fifth age, Gelasius Pope composed hymns, prefaces and prayers, which were to be said at the sacrifice of the mass, and in the administration of the sacraments. The same Gelasius was the first who formed a sacramentary, in which the offices and ceremonies appertaining to the mass for every day in the year, are carefully regulated, and vary but little from the method which is actually in use. It is there-

fore plain that his meaning was to favour daily communion at least among priests, nor can it be supposed that the laity were excluded from this daily blessing, since it has been observed elsewhere, yet cannot be too often repeated, that in those days, the faithful seldom or never assisted at the sacrifice without receiving the sacrament.

In the same century, Leo the great, and the first Pope of the name, communicated, say Valfridus and Durandus, from seven to nine times every day*. The zeal of this pontiff, tho' great in building or repairing churches to God's honor, was still greater and more active in supporting frequent communion: of this he gives proof in his letter to the bishops of Vienna:

* Valf. in l. de rebus eccles. Durand. in rationali D. Offic. l. 4. c.

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“ Communion should not easily be re-
“ fused to any of the faithful, nor
“ should the refusal of it promiscu-
“ ously depend on the caprice of every
“ priest whose zeal for purity of con-
“ science may be exclusive, and wound
“ up to too stern a degree of rigorism :
“ we are informed that this has hap-
“ pened ; and that several have been
“ deprived of the benefit of this sa-
“ crament, for the commission or
“ some venal faults, or for the utte-
“ rance of some unprofitable and idle
“ words : it is no ways becoming that
“ any soul, for whom the blood of
“ Christ has been shed, should under-
“ go so unproportionable a punish-
“ ment, because under such a priva-
“ tion she would be left destitute of
“ proper help, and exposed defenceless
“ to the wiles of her enemy, whose

“craft, in this her weakness, would
“easily circumvent her*.”

In the sixth century, Gregory the Great, writes to his friend Eulogium, “We celebrate mass daily, in
“which we commemorate the holy
“martyrs.” In his eighth letter, he says: “I have now been confined to
“bed through the gout, for near two
“years: and my pains are so acute,
“that I can hardly celebrate on holy-
“days.” In his book on sacramental matters, which regulates the masses for every day in the year, this pontiff clearly shews his zeal for frequent communion, when he says †: “The
“Lord by giving us this sacrament,
“has amply provided for our salva-
“tion: for though our Redeemer
“died for us but once, this sacrament

* Ann. 598. † Serm. 4. de Quadrag-

“ is taken DAILY, that we may obtain pardon of our daily transgressions.” And elsewhere we read* : “ We should despise from our hearts this present world, because it is but momentary : whilst our whole employ should be to make an offering to God of our tears, and DAILY to immolate the sacrifice of his flesh and blood.”

Nicolas I. in the ninth article of his answer to the Bulgarians, says † : “ You may communicate EVERY DAY in Lent, as well as at any other time : from which practice, we earnestly pray to the Almighty Lord that you may never depart, and to our prayers we sincerely add our warmest exhortations to the continuance of it.” And in the thirty-

* Dial. l. 4. c. viii.

† Ann. 866.

fifth article, he recommends in lieu of their former superstitions in their preparations for war, that they would seek for better defence from an assiduity at the holy altars, and a frequent participation of the holy mysteries.

To render daily communion more easy and practicable, Pope Stephen, who lived in the same century, abolished the custom which had obtained in St. Peter's church, of exacting by way of licence, a yearly sum of money from every priest, who to indulge his devotion, chose that place for his daily offerings. And Pope Leo the IX. who had been bishop of Toul, immolated the immaculate lamb every day of his life.

St. Gregory the VII. of that name, in his thirteenth letter to the princess Malthides, says : " Among the many
" arms, which, by the grace of God,

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“ I have pointed out to you, to shield
“ you from the snares of the prince of
“ this world, the chief and the most
“ excellent, is frequently to receive
“ the body of our Lord, and to place
“ the greatest confidence in the protec-
“ tion of the mother of God.”

St. Peter Celestin, relented twice from his custom of daily celebration, because some disagreeable temptations, indicated, as he thought, his unworthiness to receive so often ; but our Lord, both by revelation, and by the advice of a holy man, made known to him, that his daily offerings were by far more pleasing, than his misplaced reverence and respect. It is therefore beyond a doubt, that through the course of the thirteen first centuries of the Church, the tradition and doctrine of sovereign pontiffs, have invariably

taught, supported, and favored frequent communion.

An additional and superabundant proof of what has been said, obviously presents itself from the institution of the feast in honor of this great sacrament, which took place under Urban the fourth. The bull, which this pontiff issued out on the occasion, is an admirable compendium of the many wonders which flow from the eucharistic offering. He admits, that it is frequently and even DAILY attended to, and received by the faithful, but yet wishes that, during this more solemn

* Licet igitur hoc memoriale sacramentum in QUOTIDIANIS Missarum solemnibus frequentetur, conveniens est . . . duximus statuendum ut de tanto sacramento præter QUOTIDIANAM memoriam quam de ispo facit Ecclesia, solemnior & specialior annuatim memoria celebretur. *Bulla Transitorius.*

festival, all would particularly unite in praises and thanksgivings to God for so many unmerited blessings, and by their earnest and redoubled fervor, they would repair in some measure, the many injuries and insults which are yearly offered, by loose Christians, to this adorable sacrament. I could cite many other regulations and decrees, of several great and holy pontiffs, tending to encourage and promote frequent communion ; but, to avoid prolixity, I content myself with observing, that the zeal of those heads of the Church, for this holy practice is very conspicuous in the number of monasteries and churches which they erected and founded, to extend the practice and facilitate the use of communion : in the number of pious missionaries, whom they have solicitously sent, and indefatigably send to this day, to all parts

of the globe, to propagate the doctrine, and inculcate the utility of this wonderful sacrament; in the number of saints of both sexes, whose names they have classed in the list of saints, chiefly because they had drawn their sanctity from daily or frequent communion: in their approbation of many religious orders of men, whose drift it should be to spread the priesthood, and provide the faithful with preachers and directors, to instruct them in, and lead them to, the practice of holy communion: in the encouragement they have given to a variety of communities of women, and pious virgins, who consecrate their lives, by night and by day, in singing the praises of their heavenly spouse concealed in the Eucharist, and who, through a frequent and daily participation of his hidden treasures, emulate in love, and resemble in purity the

spirits above: in the great number of confraternities established in honor of the blessed sacrament, which encreasing under the approbation of the holy See, have extended themselves universally over the Christian world: in the grant of many indulgences, which include, as a necessary condition, holy communion: and finally, in the number of general as well as provincial councils, which they have assembled and confirmed for the refutation of those heretics, who, by broaching various errors, have impugned this inestimable sacrament: thus Beringarius stood condemned by Leo IX. and again by Nicholas II. and thirdly by Gregory VII. Wiclef also and John Hus, by Leo X. Paul III. Jules III. and Pius IV. who, in their confirmation of the council of Trent, declare, enjoin, and order that whatever has been regulated

and defined, either relative to the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, or to the frequent use of this sacrament, must be inviolably observed by all and every one of the faithful : lastly, many errors contained in several books, tending to deter, and withdraw from frequent communion, have received condemnation from Innocent X. Alexander VII. and several other popes down to our present time.

We read in the catechismi of the council of Trent, published by order of Pius V. “ * It is incumbent on
“ curates, frequently to inculcate on
“ the minds of their flock, that as
“ they take DAILY corporal nourish-
“ ment, they also should be particu-
“ larly careful DAILY to feed their
“ souls with the blessed Eucharist ;
“ the manna, which was the figure

* Cat. Con. Frid. 2. p. c. 4. sess. 60.

“ of the eucharistic bread, was the
 “ DAILY food of the Children of Israel.
 “ We are not therefore to imagine,
 “ that St. Augustin was particular in
 “ his opinion, when he said, *You sin*
 “ *daily, and therefore communicate dai-*
 “ *ly*: it is the universal and unanimous
 “ sense of the fathers.” The said
 pope celebrated mass every day; and
 indulged Mary queen of Scots, during
 her rigorous confinement, in receiving
 at pleasure, the consecrated bread,
 which had been secretly brought to
 her.

Innocent XI. in one of his bulls,
 speaks in the following manner; “ Al-
 “ though the frequent and daily use,
 “ of the holy Eucharist, has always
 “ been approved of by the most holy
 “ fathers of the church*, they have

* Etsi frequens quotidianusque sanctæ Eucha-
 ristix usus a sanctissimis Patribus fuerit in Ecclesiâ
 semper probatus. Bulla Innoc. XI.

“ not exactly determined the particu-
“ lar days, either of the month or
“ week on which the faithful were to
“ receive it: even the council of
“ Trent, has not specified them: this
“ holy council however, having in
“ view the frailty of fallen man, has
“ clearly signified the warmest wishes
“ and desires for frequent communion,
“ and judiciously has avoided the
“ nomination of fixed times for this
“ holy duty. For as the human eye
“ cannot penetrate the foldings of the
“ heart, nor human prudence discern
“ the degree of dissipation to which
“ many of the faithful may be sub-
“ ject in their various occupations, nor
“ yet discover the graces and gifts
“ which God imparts to his children,
“ so no general rule or order can be
“ given, which determines the proper
“ disposition, and exact purity of heart

“ of each particular, with respect to
 “ FREQUENT and DAILY commu-
 “ nion.

“ It is therefore necessary, that this
 “ business should be left to directors,
 “ whose prudence is to mark out the
 “ safest path to their respective peni-
 “ tents: when and how often mer-
 “ chants and married people should
 “ receive communion, as it shall seem
 “ beneficial to them, suitable to the
 “ purity of their souls, and propor-
 “ tionable to the fruits they reap from
 “ it. The principal care therefore
 “ and concern of Bishops, must be by
 “ no means to withdraw or terrify souls
 “ from FREQUENT OR DAILY commu-
 “ nion, but to encourage and prompt
 “ them to it, as it suits their de-
 “ votion, or as it is conformable to
 “ the opinion of their pastors and di-
 “ rectors. Bishops also must see that

“ no one be with-held from this hea-
“ venly banquet, even though they
“ should desire to assist at it DAILY :
“ but whether it be sought for seldom
“ or often, each particular must be al-
“ lowed full liberty to taste of that
“ divine sweetness, which is imparted
“ to him in proportion to his devotion
“ and purity of heart. It is also to be
“ published, that those religious wo-
“ men, who, besides the days assigned
“ by their rule, are judged fit to receive
“ *oftener*, and even *daily*, are by no means
“ to be impeded by their superiors. To
“ the endeavours of pastors and direc-
“ tors, it is extremely proper and desi-
“ rable, that preachers also should join
“ their assistance, in moving and ex-
“ citing the faithful to FREQUENT com-
“ munion ; this is a duty no less in-
“ cumbent on them, than that of
“ teaching their hearers what prepa-

“ rations and dispositions are requisite
“ for so holy an action.”

From the preceding positions I draw the following obvious conclusions :
FREQUENT, and even DAILY communion has been always approved of by the fathers of the Church. The Church has never singled out any particular days for going to, or abstaining from communion, but has left it to the discretion of every faithful, under the guidance of an approved director. It is not to priests only, or to religious persons, that frequent and daily communion is recommended or allowed ; the above mentioned decree, invests with the same privilege the laity, merchants, and married people. The bishops are not to withdraw from, but by every means, to excite the faithful to frequent communion : and though preachers are put in mind to inspire

their congregations with the greatest reverence for the holy Eucharist, they are never to discourage frequent and even daily communion : a proper respect for this sacrament, a just dread of sin, can never be sufficiently inculcated, but this awe and respect must tend to enforce, to draw, and lead to frequent communion. Such is the constant and invariable doctrine of all those pontiffs who have successively filled the chair of St. Peter : and such has ever been the uniform doctrine of the Church of God.

CHAPTER IX.

*The opinion and practice of the Saints
concerning frequent Communion.*

The authority of the fathers, doctors, councils, and sovereign pontiffs, has hitherto been the means made use of to throw a light on, and even to decide the important question in hand : and as they have an undisputed right to be considered as our teachers and judges in all religious matters, to oppose or pervert their doctrine in favor of frequent communion, would betray great ignorance, or what is still worse, a great depravity of heart. Frequent and daily communion, is, as we have proved, the tenet of the doctors ; it is also that of the saints of Christ's Church : and as their example and sentiments, relative to communion,

must be supposed to have been truly pure and heavenly, a fair exposition of what they did and thought, must carry conviction to the mind of every impartial reader.

Some of our modern reformers, have either ignorantly or maliciously maintained, that several of the saints have opposed frequent communion : and that others, from a sense of self unworthiness, have refrained from it, by way of better preparation for some future time. But if it be true that the intention of Jesus Christ and that of his church has an opposite tendency, if the doctrine of the fathers during the first ten or twelve centuries enforce the contrary practice, it evidently follows, that either these assertions are groundless and false, or that this peculiar conduct of such saints, was no ingredient to their sanctity : and

we know that some mistaken anchorites were severely reprimanded by St. Chrysostom for the unfrequency of their communions.

There are others again, who assert, that the recluses who dwelt in Egypt, as well as in other countries, communicated but seldom : first, they say, because they had no opportunity so to do ; and secondly, because we read nothing concerning it in their lives. Plausible as the position may seem to be, I hope amply to satisfy the reader, that those holy solitaries, both of the east and west part of the globe, had opportunities of communion, and availed themselves of them daily.

If we go up to the fourth century, in which period the deserts flourished with Anthonies, Pacomiuse's and other illustrious leaders of numberless holy monks, who then peopled the eastern recesses, we shall learn that the recluses

of those happy days resorted from time to time to the Christian town-assemblies, where they joined the faithful in communion, and on their return took with them the blessed Eucharist, of which they partook, when alone in their cells. This truth is attested by St. Jerom and St. Chrysostom : and St. Basil informs us, that such was the practice of the recluses he lived with. The following are his words :

“ To communicate EVERY DAY, and
“ to receive the sacred body of Jesus
“ Christ, is most commendable and
“ salutary : as to us, we communi-
“ cate four times in the week, Sun-
“ days, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sa-
“ turdays, and on other days also,
“ when there intervenes a festival ei-
“ ther of our Lord or of a saint. In
“ times of persecution, each one,
“ when destitute of priest and clerk

“ communicates himself. ALL THOSE
 “ who lead an eremetical life, where
 “ no priest is at hand*, keep by them
 “ the blessed Eucharist and receive it.
 “ In Alexandria, and in Egypt, even
 “ the most part of the laity, follow
 “ this practice, and communicate them-
 “ selves, as their devotion suggests.”

The disciples of the renowned Pacomius †, on the return of every festival, sent for a priest from the neighbouring villages, to celebrate and distribute the sacred mysteries ; which, when they received, their custom was to lay aside their cloak and girdle, retaining only their cassock. In process

Omnes qui in eremo sunt, ubi non est sacerdos, communionem domi habentes accipiunt. In Alexandria & Egypto unusquisque ex iis qui ex populo sunt, ut plurimum communionem domi habentes, cum vult, assumit.

Basil. ad patri. Cæsar. c. ult^a

† An. 363. l. 2. Hist. Fleury.

of time, Pacomius fixed a priest in every monastery.

Cassian informs us, that the hermit Paphnutius, even when fourscore and ten years of age, regularly walked to a church six miles off, every Saturday and Sunday, where he said mass to the monks of Scetis, and gave them communion.† In the town of Oxiringa, situated in the lower Thebes ‡, there were in different convents and monasteries, twenty thousand virgins and ten thousand monks : the number of their churches amounted to twelve, besides several oratories belonging to the monks, where mass and communion were constantly performed.

Not far from a town called Antinoüs, there flourished ten convents of women, who resorted every Sunday to

† Cass. Col. 3. c. i.

‡ Pallad. Vit. Pat. 2. c. v.

a neighbouring church, to partake of the holy mysteries. And in the desert of Nitria, for the same pious purpose, eight priests belonged to one church, which was frequented by five thousand monks, who lived in fifty adjoining monasteries *.

Near the town of Hermopolis, which stood on the banks of the river Nile, where it is believed that the Virgin-mother and St. Joseph had carried the Infant-Jesus in their flight into Egypt, there were assembled five thousand monks, under the direction of the great Apollonius, whose constant endeavour it was to promote daily communion : he was ever apprehensive, lest an estrangement from this sacrament, should bring on a neglect of every other duty. He was also particularly

* Pallad. c. cxxxvii.

attentive, that none of his followers should break fast before that holy action*.

St. Luke, junior, a famous solitary †, upon hearing that the archbishop of Corinthia was to pass by the mountain of St. John, went thither to give him the meeting, and presented him with a few herbs which his little garden afforded. The prelate, pleased with the gift, would take a view of his habitation, and in return, tendered to him some pieces of gold. But the holy man refusing the offer, said, it is not gold I want ; all I stand in need of are prayers and instructions : however, to remove the chagrin which he perceived his refusal had occasioned, he took one piece of money, and continued his discourse ; *my Lord, we whom*

* Vitæ Pat. Appol.

† Boland. Febr. T. 4. p. 83.

our sins have driven into deserts, having no priest within reach of us, by what means are we to partake of the holy mysteries? The archbishop replied, you must do what you can to procure one and if your endeavours prove unsuccessful, you will place the vase of consecrated bread on the altar, if you make use of oratory, or else, if in your cell, you will take a clean table, and spread over it a cloth, on which you will put the sacred host, you will then sing the *Trisagion*, or the hymn which names God three times holy, to which you will add the creed, and after three genuflections, you will take with your mouth the body of Jesus Christ.

St. Sabas, inhabitant of Syria, abbot of several monasteries, renowned throughout the East, for the austerity of his life, and respected by several

emperors, for his irreproachable conduct, never took any nourishment during Lent, but what he received from the eucharistic bread.

It is not therefore a point to be held questionable, whether frequent communion universally prevailed among the recluses of the East; the facts which I have alledged, prove it beyond a doubt: and as the monastic mode of living was transferred from East to West, it is equally unquestionable, that the same spirit diffused itself among the monks of the western climates. This, however, is what we shall now investigate, trusting that the bare investigation alone, will dissipate every objection that can be made to the contrary.

It is advanced by some, that St. Benedict, the patriarch of western recluses, lay concealed a long while in

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his retreat without communicating : that he founded twelve monasteries on, or near the mountain Cassinus, and that in the rules which he laid down for their observance, no mention is made of communion. The fallacy of this way of reasoning, I should think is too glaring, not to be observed by an impartial eye. This saint, it is true, was three years concealed from the knowledge of all mankind, exclusive of one single monk, whose name was Roman : and as this faithful friend provided him with corporal nourishment, it is obvious to conclude that he was still more his friend in his spiritual concerns, by supplying him with the Eucharist, which practice, we have observed, was frequent among recluses.

It is a known fact, that the anchorets of the west as well as of the east, either resorted to public meetings

in town or country, or had priests to come to them, from whom they received communion : and when they went out, if they had no priest in community, they took home with them the blessed Eucharist.

Guimundus, bishop of Aversa, in the kingdom of Naples, writes*, that the ancient hermits were in general so comforted and invigorated by communion, that several of them took no other nourishment : and that if at any time they chanced to abstain from this heavenly table, they perceptibly flagged in spirits and in health. He adds, that many of those holy men communicated daily, through the ministry of angels.

If the primitive rule of St. Benedict makes no mention of frequent commu-

* Tract. de Corp. & Sang. Jes. Christ, in Eucharistia.

nion, this silence must have proceeded from the prevailing custom among Christians in general of frequent communion : it would therefore have been needless to recommend that to religious people, which even among the laity was held as a point of duty.

St. Gregory confirms my assertion : this great prelate, not long after the death of St. Bennet, charmed with the excellency of his rules, embraced the monastic state, and in time was chosen abbot : no day passed which he did not sanctify by celebrating mass, and he inspired the communities of the seven monasteries, which he built, with the same devotion : and when Pope, the better to promote this holy practice, he appointed priests for every monastery, exempted the Italian monks from episcopal jurisdiction, and freed

them from the obligation of resorting to public meetings.

This pontiff, whose zeal was indefatigable, sent St. Augustin with apostolic power to this happy island of Great Britain, where the Christian faith, the monastic life, and frequent communion soon became so conspicuous, as to attract the admiration of the rest of the Christian world. History furnishes us with a particular proof of what I advance. One Thèodore had ruled the abbey of Cromall for the space of sixty-two years : when the Normans made an irruption, which threatened the monastery with plunder and destruction, the venerable abbot ordered thirty of his monks, ten of whom were priests, to retire elsewhere : mean while, the consecrated plate, and an elegant and costly table belonging to the high altar, were concealed in a

deep well. Theodore and the remaining monks went in their church-robcs to the choir, sung as usual their canonical hours, the abbot celebrated high-mass, and gave communion to all who were present. By this time, the barbarians had forced their way into the church: one of their kings, by name Osketul, slew the abbot on the altar, whilst his attendants beheaded the assisting ministers.

About the same time,* Grimlaic gave to the anchorets in England the following rule: "The recluses shall shut themselves up in a cell, and shall make a vow never to go out of it: the cells shall adjoin to a monastery, they shall be small and carefully closed up, and provided with every thing necessary. If the recluse be a priest, he must have an

* An. 893.

“ oratory consecrated by a bishop, and
“ a window must face the Church,
“ through which he is to take his
“ offerings for mass.” He also strongly
recommends mental prayer, and
greatly approves of daily mass and com-
munion*.

The order of Cluni was formed in
the tenth century, much upon the plan
of that of St. Benedict. Ulric, a mem-
ber of that community, informs us,
“ that the monks of Cluni sung two
“ high-masses on all festival days, one
“ of the day, and the other for the dead;
“ on Sundays three were sung: one
“ side of the choir communicated on
“ the three first days of the week, and
“ the other side on the other three: in
“ time of divine office, several low
“ masses were offered†.”

* C. 36. Cod. Reg. T. 2. p. 464.

† Ann. 1391.

We read in the life of St. Odilon, one of the first abbots of the said order, that he celebrated mass daily, for the space of fifty-six years : and on his death-bed he entreated one of his monks, ' Abbraldus, to sum up the number of masses which he had said throughout his life, as if the reward which he was in immediate expectation of, depended on his assiduity in this holy practice. Near the same time, Cardinal Matthew, who had also been a member of that order, never retrenched any part of the long psalmody he had been used to, and always persevered in his daily offering.

Richard, abbot of St. Vanne, and a follower of the Benedictin rule, conducted to Jerusalem, at his own expenses, seven hundred pilgrims : during his journey, he recited the divine office, and celebrated mass daily : even

when on infidel ground, and surrounded by heathens, he did not omit the holy offering ; and frequently performed his devotion at a little distance from their towns, whilst they were insulting him from their walls with volleys of stones, and shouts of derision ; Providence protected him from mischief, and his patience bore with their mockeries.

St. Bruno, founder of the Carthusian order, so justly famed for holy retirement, was particularly attentive to frequent communion. For according to their constitutions, which were collected by Guigne, one of their first generals, these virtuous men are enjoined confession either to their prior, or to some one deputed for that purpose, on Saturdays ; and on Sundays, a mass was celebrated, besides the conventual offering. In their churches there was nothing of gold or of silver,

except a chalice and a tube through which they received the sacred blood. They therefore communicated at least weekly, from the first formation of their holy institution.

The stern and severe discipline of the hermits of Camaldoli, was first planned by St. Romuald : singular was the austerity of his life ; and as singular was the pitch of perfection to which he attained. Besides his foresight into things to come, he was raised to a contemplation which was animated with seraphic love, and which frequently forced from him these emphatical words, “ Dear “ Jesus, my sweet Jesus, my ineffable “ desire ! ” He daily said mass, though not in public, on account of a constant flood of tears which his devotion drew from him. The irregular conduct of one of his monks, having obliged him to reprove him severely, the unhappy

delinquent took his revenge by recrimination. The calumny, for a while, gained credit, though the virtue of the abbot was upheld by many miracles, and strongly supported by the venerable sanction of old age. His disciples condemned him to particular penances, and suspended him from the holy sacrifice. The humility of the saint made him acquiesce in silence for the space of six months, to the rigor of the sentence; after which, our Lord appeared to him, and bid him lay aside his indiscreet simplicity, and as usual to celebrate mass: the next day he obeyed, and during the sacrifice, he remained for a considerable time enraptured.

From what has been said of St. Bernard, it is clear, that his monks communicated most frequently: and we have from himself, that numbers of

other monks and abbots, followed the same custom : he seldom or never omitted mass, to the last day of his life ; and this same practice he had introduced into seventy-two monasteries, which he had either founded, or incorporated with his order.

St. Norbert, who also instituted a religious order, daily sacrificed the immaculate Lamb. Being engaged one day in this heavenly function, in a subterraneous chapel, a large spider dropped into the chalice after consecration. The respect and love with which his breast glowed, removed from it every shadow of fear of evil consequences, and therefore, at the usual time, he swallowed what was contained in the cup, without concern. Mass being over, he entered upon his prayers of thanks, in some expectation of death : the event however was otherways : and

most probably he was miraculously preserved. This servant of God, sold all he was possessed of, except what was necessary for the holy sacrifice; which he frequently offered twice in the day.

I cannot omit mentioning the zeal of St. Fulgentius, bishop in Africa, not only for his own frequency of communion, but also for promoting the same devotion in several large and populous cities. * This great and admirable doctor, charmed the age he lived in with the beauty of his genius, and the noble candor and sincerity of his heart. A considerable part of his life was monastic, and several monasteries, both in Africa and Sicily, acknowledged him for their founder. At length, being compelled to take up

* 6 Century.

the episcopal dignity, he entered upon his functions by celebrating the holy mysteries, and distributing among his flock, their daily bread. He was sent from Africa into banishment, for the second time, by king Trasamont, of Arian principles: this prince was too impatient of the great zeal of the saint, to behold with indifference the innumerable conversions which his indefatigable labours were continually effecting; but to conceal his departure, he ordered him to be shipped off in the night. The wind however being unfavorable to the king's intention, the ship, for several days, was confined to the coast. This gave the alarm, and spread among the Carthagenians, the fate of their beloved pastor. Almost the whole town assembled on the shore to take their leave of him; he received them with the tenderness of a father,

exhorted them to virtue, and fed them all with the bread of life.

From the above general and constant tradition, it seems evident, that frequent communion was in force, both in the eastern and western deserts, in every age of the church : nor is it improper here to observe, that, if we do not always read in the lives of the saints, that they communicated, we never read any where that they did not communicate. Frequent communion was a common and ordinary practice among every set of Christians ; and historians in general, transmit to posterity, facts only and occurrences, which are uncommon and extraordinary. Innumerable are the saints whose baptismal registers are no where recorded : are we therefore to conclude, that they were not baptized ? How pitiful would the reasoning be that should urge, we have no

account in history of the baptism of many saints, it was therefore the practice in their times to go without baptism; we therefore, at their example, may omit that sacrament? this parity will be allowed to be substantially deficient: for no point can warrantably be set up for imitation, that is not good in itself, conformable to the rules of Christ's Church, and clearly ascertained as an undoubted fact. Unfrequent communion is destitute of these three characters, whilst frequent communion has the full sanction of all three.

From the praise which our Redeemer bestowed on the humility of the Centurion, who said, "Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof," some one may infer, that we may, with equal propriety, entertain the same sort of sentiment, and, by abstaining from communion,

may deserve the same approbation both from Christ and his Church. But he who is biassed to this way of reasoning, should first reflect, that neither Christ nor his Church can ever approve of a conduct which widely strays from their intention, and clearly opposes their express command. The Centurion, of whom the gospel speaks, knew no precept which obliged him to give our Lord admittance: and were communion equally at our option, were we equally unacquainted with our Saviour's desire as he was, a resemblance of speech and sentiment in us, would be equally commendable.

There are others who oppose to this doctrine, the example of St. Bennet and St. Francis, who never could be prevailed upon to take priestly orders, while we read of some other

saints, who, though in orders, were afraid to celebrate.

The character of priesthood is, doubtless, the most sacred and awful that can be assumed. It is a known truth, that many saints have refused holy orders : it is not every one who is called to that dignity ; neither is there any law which enforces the acceptance of it : the point actually in question, relates not to priesthood, but to frequent communion, as enjoined by Jesus Christ and his Church : the humility of the above-mentioned saints, was no obstacle to their frequent communion, nor the least hindrance to their reading the same lesson to all their disciples.

If we read of a few holy men, who, though in orders, refrained from their privilege, we read at the same time, that they were reprimanded for their

timidity and misplaced respect, and commanded to follow the more beaten tract, of frequent offering: we have elsewhere observed, that this was the case with St. Peter Celestin: and a similar motive of humility led St. Bonaventure into the same misunderstood devotion, till an angel came to communicate him, by which favor, he was readily brought to a daily participation of the heavenly banquet.

But, after all, it is not every thing which every saint may have done, that claims our imitation: singly considered they were men, and consequently fallible; they acknowledged their mistake, and came back to the living and unerring rule, which is the Church: whilst they moved according to her doctrine and practice, they called on us to do as they did: but in no other supposition. The Church never has yet, and never

will propose to our imitation the conduct of any saint whose maxim it might have been to abstain from frequent communion.

On the contrary, this spouse of Jesus Christ, exhibits to our view and veneration, an endless string of martyrs, who by virtue of the eucharistic bread, became superior to the keenest torments, and triumphed over death itself. By means of the same heavenly manna, thousands of virgins, whom the church now honors, preserved in their mortal bodies, a purity equal to that of angels, which is the special and common effect of frequent communion*. From the same source the thrones of great kings and emperors drew sanctity and lustre : queens also and empresses graced their elevated

* Vinum germinans virgines. Zach. 9.

station from the frequent participation of this hidden treasure; innumerable others of every age, rank, and condition, have, by the same means, arrived at the highest pitch of perfection; they are placed in the kalendar of saints, their example is set before us, that we may do as they have done: the catalogue is long, it would be endless to descend to every particular; yet for greater satisfaction, I shall briefly point out the practice and opinions of some holy men and women relative to this subject.

Thomas of Aquin, the brightest ornament of his respectable order, celebrated mass daily, and constantly assisted at a second, by way of thanksgiving. Peter Martyr, and Vincent Ferreri of the same religious body, and both conspicuous for their apostolical

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labours, regularly began the day with the holy offering, and were incessant panegyrists of frequent communion.

S. Catharine of Sienna, who was the wonder and prodigy of her sex for her angelical purity, her admirable patience and heavenly wisdom, habitually burned with the greatest desire of daily communion. She passed several lents on no other food than the eucharistic bread. It once happened that her director refused to indulge her with communion, but he soon was made sensible of his indiscretion : for as he was celebrating mass, and being on the point of communicating, he only could find half of the sacred host, which threw him into the greatest perplexity and consternation, in which he continued, till mass being over ; the holy virgin gave him comfort, by saying, set your mind at rest, the Lord

has granted me what you had refused me: an angel has communicated me with that part of the host which occasioned your distress. From whence he took lesson never more to thwart her pious desires. A certain bishop, whose opinion was rather unfavorable to this daily custom of Catherine, insinuated to her that weekly communion might be better, and alledged the saying of St. Augustin, importing that he neither approved or disapproved of daily communion; to which she replied, *do then as he did, if you do not approve of it, do not disapprove of it.*

S. Francis of Borgia, while duke of Candia, and viceroy of Catalona, fed weekly at the sacred table, which gave rise to an altercation among the Spanish doctors*. Some were of opi-

* Salmer. tract. 24. de frequent. usu Eucharist.

nion that this frequency derogated from the respect which was due to so great a sacrament ; others, on the contrary, strenuously supported the right which the viceroy had to tread in the footsteps of the primitive Christians, and to move in conformity to the authority of the fathers. The contention, for a time, was stubborn on both sides, but as happily terminated by the interposition of S. Thomas of Villa Nova, who peremptorily decided in favour of frequent communion. Meanwhile the duke, for further satisfaction, wrote to Ignatius of Loyola, who at that time was famous for the many illustrations with which heaven had favoured him, entreating his opinion on the subject. The answer of the saint was : “ That, in general, “ it was true to say, that one of the “ many good effects of frequent com-

“ munion, is to help those who fall
“ into imperfections through weak-
“ ness and human frailty, speedily and
“ easily to rise again : it is by much
“ more safe to receive this divine sa-
“ crament with love, reverence and
“ confidence, than to keep from it
“ through fear and timidity : and
“ as the duke’s way of life was
“ regular and exemplary, he advised
“ him by all means to continue his
“ pious custom, not doubting that
“ not only he himself would great-
“ ly be benefited by it, but others
“ also, from his example.” This
kind of prophesy was amply fulfilled
in course of time ; Borgia, when vice-
roy, and when a religious of the so-
ciety of Jesus, was so successful in Spain
and Portugal in promoting frequent
communion, that both courts assumed
the form of academies of virtue.

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St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, had learned at the school of Ignatius to propagate with the greatest zeal this holy practice, and was so successful, that, in divers parts of the kingdom of Portugal, and particularly at the court of John III. then reigning, weekly communion became universal. He carried this doctrine to the Indies, which was powerful enough to sanctify millions of proselytes and other Christians. He daily began his apostolical functions with the holy mass, and through a veneration for this great sacrament, he always distributed it on his knees. Among the many wonders which the Indies beheld in this saint, that which made him appear in size above what was human, when he gave communion, was striking and astonishing.

With these Christian heroes, I class St. Francis of Sales, the great apostle of Savoy and of France, who brought back to the fold of Christ seventy-two thousand Calvinists ; he speaks, as follows, of communion : “ Mithridates “ king of Pontus, to guard against “ the effects of poison, had made familiar to himself a certain food “ which in the course of time rendered “ him so robust, that, when on the point “ of being taken by the Romans, and “ in dread of slavery, he tried unsuccessfully the destructive bane. Is “ this not what our Lord has contrived in the Eucharist, in which he “ gives us his body, and his adorable “ blood as a food to which immortality is annexed * ? Whoever therefore frequently and devoutly par-

* Devout life on freq. commun. 2. p. c. xx.

“ takes of it, receives so much
 “ strength and vigour, that it is al-
 “ most impossible for any deadly poi-
 “ son of sinful inclinations to effect
 “ his soul. No ; a man cannot partake
 “ of this food of life, and die of the
 “ death of sin. It would be an impru-
 “ dence to advise every body to DAILY
 “ COMMUNION, but it would be no
 “ less imprudent to dissuade every one
 “ from it, or blame DAILY COMMU-
 “ NION : for several pious souls may
 “ be properly disposed for so great a
 “ blessing, and may be authorised by
 “ their directors so to do.”

He answers every objection that can
 be made, and removes every difficul-
 ty, by saying : “ And truly the primi-
 “ tive Christians communicated EVERY
 “ DAY, even those who were married :
 “ wherefore I advance that FREQUENT

“ communion can be no ways improper for any one.”

In his introduction as well as in his letters, he warmly recommends frequent and daily communion ; and the order of the visitation, which he formed on the model of the primitive church, clearly delineates his sentiments on this head. His whole plan and regulation seem to drive at this particular point, and those would be perfect followers of his rule, whose practice it was to receive daily.

The famous woman of mount Carmel, Teresa, during the three and twenty last years of her life, communicated daily : from that time she was freed from a retching, which till then she had been subject to every coming. She was often seen, at her communions, surrounded with glory, and in her thanksgivings enraptured in the air.

There was nothing which she more pressingly recommended to the faithful than a due attention to avail themselves, to the best advantage, of those precious moments, during which Jesus Christ is in their breasts, before the consummation of the sacred species. What this saint writes on the fourth demand in the Lord's prayer, deserves great notice.

“ I cannot persuade myself, that the
“ object of our petition to God in
“ these words, *give us this day our*
“ *daily bread*, is temporal to preserve
“ the body : we entreat him to give
“ us the most holy Eucharist, which
“ is the bread above all substance, it
“ is to pray that he himself should
“ become our food.” And lower
down : “ It is readily discovered with
“ what plentitude of heart, he gives
“ himself to us : since he styles this

“ sacred meat, the bread of every
“ day, and would have us petition for
“ it daily. Yet great attention must
“ be paid to that purity of heart, and
“ to those virtues which should be
“ practised by those who thus re-
“ ceive it.”

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzis, to gratify her longing desire of frequent communion, entered the Convent of St. Mary of Angels, under the Carmelitic rule, because they there communicated daily. This holy woman, frequently felt great sorrow and grief, arising from the little respect which, in general, was paid to holy communion, and from the want of a desire among Christians, of receiving it often. “ I undoubtedly hold,” she was used to say, “ that one communion performed with heart and sentiment, is alone sufficient greatly to perfect

“ a soul ; let us pray to our lord, that
“ he would vouchsafe to grant us his
“ light, which may awaken our tepi-
“ dity and remissness in his holy ser-
“ vice, especially our tardiness in
“ receiving this bread of life, which
“ is a fire of love.” Communion was,
I may say, her predominant holy pas-
sion, and in sickness, as in health, she
received it daily. It happened, that
some means were taken to withdraw
her from this custom : “ Should it be,
“ she said, on account of my unwor-
“ thiness, and by the command of my
“ Director, I will readily obey : but
“ no other motive shall induce me to
“ abstain from this holy sacrament,
“ were it even to cost me my life : for
“ without this heavenly bread, I by
“ no means could endure the suffer-
“ ings which I experience, both in
“ body and in mind : but when I am

“refreshed with this celestial food,
“I feel myself equal to the weight of
“my cross.”

We read, that S. Gertrude, who also communicated daily, offered up her morning actions by way of preparation for communion, and those of the afternoon in thanksgiving for so great a favor. She constantly recommended frequent communion, and was privileged by heaven, in a manner uncommon, even to other saints. For our Lord assured her, that she never should give an improper advice concerning this sacrament, and that he would so support, with his holy grace, such as she should counsel to communion, that none of them should receive unworthily. To confirm the point in question, I might copy the fourth book of the following of Christ. Grenade, Taulerus, Blossius, Rodriguez,

Dupont, and an hundred other masters of spiritual matters, who unanimously teach frequent communion: for such is the doctrine of all who have served God in spirit and in truth. We shall now discuss what purity is demanded for frequent and worthy communion.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Holiness requisite and commanded for worthy and frequent Communion.

It should seem sufficiently proved, that it is evidently conformable to the views of Jesus Christ, and of his Church, that the faithful should frequently partake of this life-giving food: the man who persists in the opposite opinion, either betrays great

ignorance, or wilfully shuts his eyes to obvious and palpable truths. In fact, the opponents to frequent communion, do not directly condemn it. They even seemingly approve of it on the one hand, whilst on the other, they equivalently oppose it, by too rigidly exacting, for a worthy participation of it, an uncommon fund of virtue, and of sanctity. I trust, however, that on a rational and impartial discussion of the point in hand, the most plausible arguments of such rigorists, will, of themselves, fall to the ground. For who, with any propriety, can possibly suppose, that our Redeemer would so impose upon mankind, as to invite them to frequent communion, and expect from them, at the same time, such dispositions as were beyond their reach, and superior to their strength. An assertion like this, is irrational and

impious. That parent would be not only devoid of feeling, but also would be a monster, who should place food for his children where they could not come at it. Now, as our loving and merciful Lord and Father would become the daily bread to Christians, it is evident that the disposition he exacts of them for this, is such only as bears a proportion to human frailty and weakness. This is a principle not to be contested, and I think sufficient to remove every prejudice to the contrary.

For to trace the necessary preparation for communion, from the elements of our religion, let us examine our catechistical instructions on unworthy communion, and we shall find no other document than, that we receive not sacrilegiously unless we receive in the state of mortal sin. He therefore, who is free from mortal sin, either by

the innocence of his conduct, or through a sincere sorrow joined to absolution, may be assured that he does not communicate unworthily: or, in other words, he who communicates in the state of grace, communicates worthily.

To throw a better light on this subject, it is proper to distinguish two sorts of sanctity: the sanctity of strict precept, and that of decency and of counsel. That of strict precept, is at all times absolutely necessary for communion, and the want of it would be productive of a sacrilege. It essentially consists in an actual exemption from mortal sin, and in being in the state of grace, through a faith which is animated by charity. The sanctity of counsel is an actual exemption from all venial sin, and an actual disposition of fervor and devotion, proportioned to

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the graces received. He who is free from mortal sin, is in God's holy grace and friendship, and he who possesses his friendship, is in possession of the disposition which is requisite and commanded for communion : and with this disposition, no communion can be sacrilegious. This is a certain and a Catholic truth, which to oppose or impugn, would be a deviation from faith.

Whenever our Redeemer speaks of the Eucharist, he constantly supposes, that the Christian who receives it is in the state of grace, a state which presents him alive to view. " My flesh is truly " food." Food appertains not to the dead, but to the living only : being useless to those, it is necessary to these, that being in life, they may continue to live. For which reason our Redeemer adds : " I, am the bread of life, the

“ living bread come down from heaven ; this bread will preserve the life of those who shall eat of it ; they shall not die.” The question is here of spiritual death : and because this sacrament always presupposes spiritual life in him who receives it, it is termed by divines a sacrament of the living, that is, of those who disengaged from mortal sin, live in grace.

The parable of the feast which our Redeemer delivered as a type or representation of communion, throws a light on this doctrine. The nuptial robe of which one of the guests was devoid, is sanctifying grace, without the possession of which, no one must presume to go to this banquet, under pain of being cast into outward darkness* : but lesser faults, human weaknesses

* Matth. xxii.

and imperfections, though it be most advisable to remove them as much as possible, do not exclude us from our right to the eucharistic table. A similar parable related by St. Luke †, clearly proves that the poor and the needy, the weak and the infirm, as they are lawfully invited and convened, so they may lawfully partake of the feast. Though they labour under many disadvantages, they are alive and in God's friendship, food therefore may, and most probably will avail them.

This assertion is by no means invalidated by an expression of our Saviour, where he says, "He that is clean, has only need to have his feet washed," as if it should import, that anterior to communion, even the smallest obstacles must be removed.

Luke xiv.

For though it be certain that the more pure and spotless we are, the more welcome and acceptable we shall be; no other inference can be drawn from our Redeemer's words, than that great purity is counselled, but not positively commanded. In compliance therefore to this counsel, the universal custom is to recite aloud the confiteor before communion, after which, the priest gives his blessing, with ~~a kind of~~ absolution from lesser faults, like a wiping off the dust which gathers about the feet. It is moreover the constant practice among the faithful, to avail themselves of the sacrament of penance, even for the remission of the smallest faults, though venial sins are not a necessary, but barely a sufficient matter of that sacrament. A golden cup, whose lustre should be lessened by some particles of dust, is not less

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gold because less bright ; so the lesser faults of a soul who is in God's friendship, destroy not the gold of charity and of grace : and nothing more is commanded for a worthy communion, than the possession of so valuable a treasure.

There are some who will say, the following words are most striking and alarming *. " Whosoever shall eat
" this bread, or drink the chalice of
" the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty
" of the body and blood of the Lord."

And therefore we ought to stand greatly in awe, especially of frequent communion, for fear of a sacrilege. The fallacy, however, of this argument, is very obvious. There is no doubt but that an unworthy communion is a sacrilegious trampling under foot the body and

* 1 Cor. xi.

blood of Jesus Christ, but when and how is this crime perpetrated? What essentially constitutes and determines an unworthy communion? Nothing but a communion performed in the state of mortal sin. Wherefore the apostle commands self-trial and self-inspection, and if, on examination, a man finds himself free from all deadly contagion, he orders him confidently to receive*, "Let him prove himself "and so eat;" but should there be guilt, let repentance follow, and then communion, "Let him prove himself, "and so eat," and in this supposition, no communion can be unworthy or sacrilegious. The apostle does not say let him try himself for some time, and then eat, nor yet does he say, let him prove himself, and through respect,

I Cor. xi.

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abstain from this bread, but let him first prepare himself, and so let him eat. Whosoever therefore repents of mortal sin, which on examination he discovers ; or is not guilty of any, ought to communicate frequently, and even daily, according to the advice of the said apostle.

This has been the unanimous language of the fathers : they have ever maintained, that an exemption from mortal sin was indeed an indispensable condition, but, at the same time, a sufficient disposition for frequent communion.

Let us hear S. Cyprian on this head* :
“ We pray that this bread may be given
“ to us DAILY, lest we, who now
“ live in Christ, and who DAILY re-
“ ceive the Eucharist as food of sal-

* Cyprian in orat. Dom. Serm. 6.

“ vation, should be obliged to abstain
“ from this heavenly bread, for the
“ commission of some more grievous
“ sin, and thus be separated from the
“ body of Christ.” In the opinion
then of this saint, mortal sin only, is
an impediment to daily communion,
which if we are free from, we may
communicate daily.

St. Chrysostom perfectly agrees with
the former. “ * To think that a long
“ interval of time between one commu-
“ nion and another, is a better pre-
“ paration for that duty, than purity
“ of heart, is a mistake productive of
“ universal disorder and confusion : he
“ always receives opportunely, whose
“ conscience is pure ; to a Christian,
“ all times should be like the festival
“ of Easter.” And elsewhere, we

* Chrys. Hom. 6. in c. 2. Ep. 1. ad Timoth.

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read, * “ He who is not conscious of
“ the guilt of any great sin, should
“ communicate DAILY.”

S. Hilarion in the west, joins in sentiment the fathers of Africa and of the east †. “ If the sins you commit are
“ not mortal, you are not to lay aside
“ your daily medicine of the body and
“ blood of our Lord.”

S. Ambrose, still more emphatically affirms that ‡, “ He who is undeserv-
“ ing of DAILY communion, is e-
“ qually underserving of receiving but
“ YEARLY, because the disposition
“ required for one communion in the
“ year, which is an exemption from
“ mortal sin, is the disposition for
“ DAILY communion. If this be
“ your daily bread, why do you re-

* In orat de beat. Philogon.

† Hill. dist. 2. de consecr.

‡ Ambr. c. in orat. dom. ex lib. 5. de Sacram.

“ receive it but once in the course of a
“ twelve-month. RECEIVE IT DAILY.”

S. Jerom, in more than one place, declares *, “ That while we are not
“ contaminated by any deadly sin, the
“ Eucharist should be our DAILY
“ nourishment.” S. Augustin writes in similar terms † : “ Carry with you
“ to the altar, a clean heart, and
“ should your sins be only daily fail-
“ ings and not mortal, reflect on what
“ you say before you receive, *forgive*
“ *us our trespasses* ; if you forgive,
“ they will be forgiven you ; go there-
“ fore to the sacred table with confi-
“ dence, you will receive a heavenly
“ bread, and not poison.”

The same saint claims our particular attention in the following lines :

* Heir. ad Licinium.

† August. in Joan. tract. 26.

“ * We are not allowed to deprive any
 “ one of communion, unless one should
 “ spontaneously declare himself guilty
 “ of some great crime, or juridically
 “ stand convicted of any capital offence
 “ in any civil or ecclesiastical court.”

To the authority of the holy fathers,
 I add that of our most distinguished
 doctors of theology, who all with one
 voice, assert with S. Thomas †, “ That
 “ mortal sin in a Christian, is the only
 “ positive obstacle to communion :
 “ and as every Christian has received,
 “ through baptism, a right to sit at
 “ the sacred table, it is in no one’s
 “ power to deprive him of it: should
 “ he even be a public sinner ^{where}, once he
 “ has done penance, he resumes his
 “ right.”

* August. in lib. de medicina pœnitentiæ, c. 6. in medio T. 9.

† D. Tho. S. 3. p. q. 80. a. 7. & 9.

The decisions also of the church, spoken by the council of Trent, are exactly of the same tenour†. “Doubtless, the more the holiness and godliness of this sacrament is made known to the Christian man, the greater should his care and attention be to receive it with great reverence and suitable purity, especially as we read in the apostle these formidable words, *he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks his own condemnation.* Let him therefore, who would communicate, attend to the command given by the said apostle, *let man prove himself:* now the invariable custom and practice of the church, declares that this necessary probation consists in this, that no Christian who is conscious of

† Concil. Trid. S. 13. c. 7.

“ any mortal sin, how contrite soever
“ he may judge himself to be, is to
“ receive the blessed Eucharist, with-
“ out having previously cleared his
“ conscience through the sacrament of
“ penance. This is an inviolable rule
“ from which the holy council de-
“ clares, no one of the faithful is
“ ever to deviate, no more than any
“ one of those, whose possession and
“ department it is, to celebrate the
“ holy mysteries.”

From the above quotation, I reason thus: First, I coincide with the holy council, that the holiness and divinity of the Eucharist, requires great purity in communicants. Secondly, I say with the apostle, that we must prove and examine ourselves, and, with the council, that this probation essentially consists in a sacramental absolution from every grievous offence. Thirdly, I say,

that to those who are unfortunately in the state of mortal sin ; this probation is necessary, even among those who, from their office, are habitually in the occasion of celebrating the divine mysteries The council, however, requires, in rigor, no other probation or disposition, because no other is absolutely wanting. Any exemption from mortal sin, therefore, or the state of grace, is the only necessary disposition ; it is consequently a disposition truly sufficient for worthy communions.

Thus, should you want to make a purchase, valued at five hundred pounds, by giving that sum, you shall be in possession ; if you have this sum, you doubtless have a sufficiency for the purpose, and who would say, that you must have more ? The ~~congregated~~ fathers in the council of Trent, require no other disposition for communion, than an exemption from mortal sin.

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the holiness, therefore, which Jesus Christ, his apostle, and his Church demand for this end, is no other than the possession of God's friendship. The Oracle has spoken, who dare contradict it ?

There are some, however, who, through a zeal which by no means is supported by proper information and knowledge, have advanced, that the purity commanded for communion, is greater than an exemption from mortal sin. But their assertions are totally destitute of proof and argument, and clearly shew, that there is an ignorant jumble made of what is of counsel, and what is of precept, contrary to the meaning of the Church, who has condemned the following assertion : * *Whosoever has not a pure*

* Bulla Alex. vii. Anno 1690.

love, and is not free from all faults, must be with-held from communion. If this perfect love were absolutely necessary for communion, communion itself would be impracticable.

Let us then stedfastly hold here, and finish this point, by giving a short, yet clear account of this Catholic doctrine. An exemption from every mortal sin, is that sanctity which makes us worthy of communion. Every thing beyond, is of counsel only, not absolutely commanded: thus qualified, I shall not profane the sacrament, I shall not receive my death, condemnation and judgment; my communion will not be unworthily or sacrilegious. Should I be so fortunate as generally to be free from mortal sin, by the dwelling of the Holy Ghost within me, I may communicate often, yet not unworthily: and, if still more

fortunately, I should always be free from mortal sin, I may constantly communicate, in the comfortable thought, that the disposition I am in, is such as is required and commanded by the Church.

It is therefore greatly to mistake the meaning of this Church, rashly and cruelly to withdraw from frequent communion, those souls whose lives are innocent, who carefully shun deadly offences, and whose earnest labour it is, to master their rising passions.

There is a colour of an argument against the above doctrine, which prevails not a little among some, of justly suspected principles, and which would insinuate, that the ancient public penances, which subsisted in various degrees, were intended as preparatives for communion: but the man who candidly is in search of truth, will

clearly find in church history, that the ancient fathers constituted those different degrees of penance, as dispositions for sacramental absolution, and not for communion. This sort of discipline has since been changed by the Church ever infallible, because ever guided by the spirit of God: the alteration is merely accidental, the essentials of this sacrament, contrition, confession and satisfaction, invariably have been the same; the whole difference is, that satisfaction formerly was sometimes public, and now, through wise and weighty reasons, it generally is private.

CHAPTER XI.

The Excellency of the Holiness which is of Precept.

By the holiness which is of precept I understand, that degree of holiness, which is exacted from every communicant, by the law of God and his Church ; now this consists essentially, as has been observed in the foregoing chapter, in an exemption from all mortal sin. It is a specious, though an absurd, as well as a dangerous and pernicious principle, to point at the infinite greatness and grandeur of God, and his incomprehensible majesty and boundless perfection, as a rule of proportion, by which we are to measure the holiness of our disposition for the blessed Eucharist. If the transcendent sanctity of God is to enter into a balance,

with that purity which we are to possess, if the effulgency of his majesty and grandeur is attentively to be viewed as exacting a suitable return of worth and excellency ; the purity of the angelic Host, the fervency of seraphic Love would fall infinitely short of what would be requisite. A state of perfection suitable to God's greatness, either in equality or in excellence, is absolutely impossible to man : nothing therefore can be more absurd, than to suppose, on the one hand, that such a state is exacted of us, and, on the other, that we are never to communicate. Nothing also can be more pernicious, than a principle of this nature, the tendency of which inevitably must be to destroy the belief of a sacrament, whose institution would be totally useless, if the due dispositions to receive it were absolutely unattainable.

Whereas the state of grace, or an exemption from mortal sin, is, with God's assistance, within every one's reach ; and it is much to be feared, that some mistaken rigorists, pay not sufficient attention to the excellency of this desirable situation. For, though it may be termed the first or lowest degree of sanctity, it ceases not to be a most noble and heroical state, a master-piece of grace, and of a christian soul. It raises man to the friendship of his God, the only object of his happiness, and brings him to a sincere detestation of every past, as well as of all future offences ; he who possesses this treasure, is stern and inflexible enough to prefer it to every other possession : parents, relations and friends, injuries and calamities, hardships, dangers, and death itself, are not weighty enough in the balance : he

postpones them all to this one darling object, and thus yields a sovereign preference to his Maker in competition with any of his works. This is attainable by man; this is the case of every one who is in the state of grace, which state, however, does not, at all times, exclude every imperfection. This preference is truly and properly a supreme, heroic and a divine homage, and is at once admirably well shaped to the grandeur of the Almighty, and the weakness of man, and consequently is a preference so generous and so extensive as to be a sufficient, as well as a pleasing disposition for communion. I therefore repeat, that those who are happily in this disposition are properly such Christians whom Jesus Christ invites to it: and would have partake of it: of this number are all those who live piously and ho-

lily in the observance of God's laws : all, of both sexes, who lead a regular and edifying life : the crowd of the indigent and poor who are satisfied with the appointments of providence ; the opposite set of the wealthy who are liberal to their fellow creatures, and retain the fear of God : and particularly the crowd of religious people, who discharge the duties of their respective callings. My motive for being so diffuse on this head, arises from an earnest desire of removing from the minds of several, those prejudices and groundless fears which retard and obstruct many fruitful and advantageous communions, from a pretence that where there intervenes any fault or failing, there ensues an unworthy communion. God avert that I ever should run down, or explode that holiness which is of counsel : or,

in other words, far be it from me ever to take any thing from the true value of that state which is free from every venal sin, and exempt from all attachment to it. It is much to be wished that we were all so fortunate and happy, and I most pressingly exhort all to use every endeavour to attain it : However as the righteous man, according to the language of the Holy Ghost, falls often in the day, we hardly can expect to be perfectly unspotted, though it behoves us daily to aim at greater purity of conscience : to which end, I positively assert, that frequent communion is the means most efficaciously as well as the most expeditiously conducive. I here advance no more than the opinion of the Council of Trent, of the Fathers, and of all the asceticks. The Council tells us that the blessed Eucharist is an anti-

dote which frees us from venal sins, from our frailties and imperfections: it consequently supposes that we are to communicate notwithstanding these imperfections: for, if we were free from them before communion, how can it be understood that communion has freed us? *Salvator noster sumi voluit sacramentum hoc, tamquam antidotum quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis.**

St. Ambrose holds the same language: † “If the blood of Jesus Christ, “ as often as it is consecrated, be shed “ for the remission of sins, I ought “ ALWAYS to receive the blessed Eucharist, that my sins may continually be forgiven me: and as I “ constantly sin, I ought always to “ take the remedy against sin.” St.

* Concil. Trid. Sess. 13, c. 2.

† Ambros. l. 4. c. 6. de Sacram.

Augustin, terms the blessed Eucharist a daily medicine for our weaknesses.

St. Francis of Sales, who stands as a perfect model to every prelate, both for the holiness of his life, and for his experience in the due management of souls in the road to perfection, often repeats : * “ Make it known to worldlings that the perfect, ought frequently to communicate, because they are properly prepared for it : and the imperfect also, that they may become more perfect ; the strong, lest they should become weak ; and the weak, that they may become strong : the sick, that they may recover health.”

Thus it is, that those venal and daily sins, which, according to St. Au-

Devout Life, p. 2. c. 21.

x 2

gustin, a fervorous recital of the Lord's Prayer is sufficient to efface, have, in daily communion, their daily remedy, through ardency of love, which this heavenly gift excites and kindles in our hearts; our daily infirmities therefore should be so far from becoming an obstacle to our daily communion, that they are precisely the motive which should induce and determine us to it. Little is the attention we pay either to the medicine or to the physician, whilst we refuse to avail ourselves of it, at the time we stand most in need of it, and when it was chiefly intended for those very circumstances, on the account of which we abstain from it.

From what I here say, I beg I may not be thought to approve of any communion, which should be performed carelessly, inattentively, or out of any

sinister or improper motive, nothing of the kind is ever to be countenanced or approved of. But my meaning is, that to labour under some venal sins and imperfections, into which we may frequently relapse, and which we rather suffer than we encourage, is no sort of hindrance to communion, because it is the remedy, and the best of remedies to all such complaints : *It is an antidote by which we are freed from our daily faults.*

Some here may alledge the practice of some saints, who, on account of their lesser sins, abstained themselves, and caused others to abstain from holy communion. I cannot positively deny the assertion : it now and then has been the case, yet not often, and never through any precept, or from any kind of obligation, which compelled them to it : the want of the proper distinction which is to be made between

what is obligatory, and what is not so, but, only of choice, will never fail to breed confusion in every debate. Our present point in question is, whether our lesser faults oblige us to refrain from communion : and I positively affirm, they do not. The examples hinted at, bring on no precept, they possibly may be laudable, but they establish no rule. Several saints have lived in continual fasting ; are we therefore under an obligation of similar austeri-ty? There were saints who preserved their virginity in the matrimonial state ; must all married people follow their example ? It is the part of a preacher, of a director, and of a writer, to speak and write theologically and with precision : whereas innovators, rigorists, and weak minds, mix and jumble together practices of bare counsel with those of strict precept.

It may further be urged, that if the primitive Christians communicated daily, they did so because they were living saints, and had attained to the practice of the sublimest virtues : they divested themselves of what they possessed, they lived in constant prayer ; like angels upon earth, they breathed forth nothing but love for Christ, and for his cross.

Plausible, but false reasoning ! Had our forefathers communicated from a motive of their superior virtue, their motive would have been vanity and presumption : many of them, indeed were holy people, but many more were very faulty and imperfect : the apostle of the Gentiles reproaches them with several of their frailties, such as their little jealousies and envies, their resentments and vanities : and S. John, who communicated daily, declares,

that, *If any one amongst us says, that he is free from sin, deceives himself, and that the truth of God is not in him.* But did the apostle, upon this account, forbid communion? by no means: on the contrary he adds, that acknowledging our sins, we are to remember that Jesus Christ is our mediator, to whose throne we are to make application for mercy and grace. Let us take his advice, and drop all thoughts of abstaining from communion, because we are spiritually weak and infirm.

However, from an expression of S. Francis of Sales, in which he dissuades daily, and even weekly communion, whilst there is left in the soul an affection to venal sin, there are some who thus do abstain to their great spiritual detriment. The affection or attachment of which the saint speaks, is a

fixed and deliberate disposition to continue in the commission of lesser faults, without any endeavour, or resolution, on our part, either to avoid them, or diminish their number : in this sense, he is to be understood, and in no other. But it is hardly to be supposed, or even to be conceived, that a Christian, who communicates like a Christian, will use no kind of endeavour to purify his conscience, before he presents himself to the Lord's table. In this view, every one has a fixed time for prayer before communion, a general pardon is asked for, a kind of general absolution is pronounced, and the sacrament of penance is mostly made use of, previously to this important action. No doubt there are some rare and particular cases, in which a director may wisely and prudently, even for venial sins only, suspend communion for a

short space of time : but as these cases are very uncommon, they do not interfere with the general rule, which admits to communion those who are in lesser sins, unless we contend, that a director is vested with the power of excommunication for the commission of venial sin. Our religion, however, teaches us, that a venial transgression, is not a necessary, but only a sufficient matter of the sacrament of penance.

Nor should frequent relapses into the same faults and imperfections, preclude an access to the holy table. The best of us are naturally prone to evil, which when we oppose and reject, when the representation of it causes in us displeasure, the inclination we feel towards it, is not an affection for it, but barely the effect of our naturally weak and infirm texture : we really could wish to be less hasty and impatient in the occurrences of life, yet we fre-

quently fall into faults of unreasonableness of temper: we as often condemn ourselves for our want of virtue, and feel sorrow and compunction for our deficiency.

The Eucharist often received, moderates our natural impetuosity, and corrects the faults it is productive of: a privation of this heavenly assistance, would give additional strength to our evil inclinations, and leave us destitute of means to correct them. There have been saints who perfectly moderated their humour, and overcame every passion, with the help of daily communion. S. Ignatius and S. Francis of Sales, were remarkable instances: yet they acknowledged themselves guilty of many faults and imperfections.

The truth is, that no man, though never so perfect, can live absolutely blameless, and entirely devoid of harm: this singular privilege was

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solely conferred on the Mother or God; to put off therefore communion, till we had attained a purity like this, would be a most presumptuous illusion. No length of time could bring our design to bear, and the most virtuous would be unfit and unable to discharge their Easter duty; the Church has never pointed out absence from communion as a means to eradicate sin: but on the contrary, she invites and exhorts us frequently to receive it, because it is an antidote to our daily failings; and to add greater weight to her exhortations, she assures us, that such was the end for which our Redeemer originally instituted this excellent sacrament.* Nothing therefore can be more evident, than that the reverence and respect which with-holds us from com-

Concil. Trid. Sess. 13.

munion, is an erroneous respect, and greatly deviating from the intention of our Saviour. To whom are we to give ear and credit on this subject? to the Church of God, or to her enemies? For I venture to advance, that an extravagant rigorist is a greater enemy to the Church, than a loose divine, though they are both to be exploded and condemned.

I conclude this chapter with the following anecdote, which we read in the life of S. Francis of Sales. A young priest, an acquaintance of the saint, had limited his celebration of mass to Sundays and holidays. De Sales, who esteemed him much, made use of the following expedient to induce him to celebrate daily. He presented him with a box which was covered with red satin, richly embroidered, and elegantly mounted, saying, "I am going to ask
" you a favor, which I hope you will

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“ not refuse me, for the glory of God
“ takes part in it, and I think I know
“ your zeal for the honor of so great a
“ master. Command me, replied the
“ priest : no, said the saint, I give no
“ command, but barely make a de-
“ mand for the present: but I make
“ it in the name and for the love of
“ God : while the other stood silent
“ and astonished, the holy prelate
“ opened the box, which was full of
“ hosts for consecration, and conti-
“ nued, you are a priest, and to this
“ sublime ministry the Lord has pe-
“ culiarly called you : would it be
“ in character for a tradesman, a ma-
“ gistrate, or a physician, to confine
“ the practice of their profession to
“ one day in the week ? You have the
“ power of celebrating daily, why do
“ you not make use of it ? It is what
“ you may safely do, your disposition

“ leads you to it. Accept of this
“ gift, and be mindful of me at the
“ altar. The priest humbly repre-
“ sented his real unworthiness, his
“ youth, his want of mortification
“ and recollection, and expressed his
“ fears of abusing so great a mystery :
“ for my part, the saint replied, I am
“ of opinion, (and I think I am guid-
“ ed by the spirit of God) that the
“ very reasons which you alledge to
“ the contrary, are most cogent mo-
“ tives for an immediate acquiescence
“ to my request : the holy Eucharist
“ frequently received, will strengthen
“ and ripen your youth, will weaken
“ and lessen your temptations, will
“ consolidate you in virtue, and better
“ than any other means, will fit you
“ for a proper discharge of your func-
“ tions.” The ecclesiastic yielded,
and followed the advice the remainder
of his life.

CHAPTER XII.

The Apostles and the Church of God have at all Times admitted to Communion, those who possessed this Holiness of Precept,

Too many are the books dispersed through the Christian world, which by constantly insinuating the great respect which is due to the eucharistic sacrament, would fain persuade their readers that the preparation exacted for communion, cannot be too great, and that penance for past sins cannot be protracted to too great a length, before we should venture to partake of this holy mystery : they therefore would have us believe, that a sinner, who, in good earnest, has returned to his duty, is still to be

put to trials of a lasting duration, previously to his admission to the sacrament: so great is the reverence, so profound the veneration which is transcendently due to it!

It is however beyond a doubt, notwithstanding these plausible colourings of awe and respect, that every sinner who is duly absolved from his sins, is in the state of grace, and by that alone, is sufficiently qualified for communion. Of this certain truth, we have irrefragable proofs from the days of the apostles down to the present age.

The eight thousand Jews and Gentiles who received the light of faith from two of St. Peter's sermons, were undoubtedly suddenly converted, and as suddenly baptized: they were also very great sinners. For the apostle reproaches them with the death of our

Lord, *auctorum vitæ interfecistis* : immediately however after baptism, they were admitted to daily communion. The Christians therefore in our days, who are penitent and have been absolved, how great soever their sins may have been, as they receive the same sanctifying grace, the same holy spirit, which qualified the primitive proselytes for frequent communion, are equally entitled to the same advantages ; unless there should be a better school for religious documents than that of the apostles. The position which imports that absolution and communion should be withheld from great sinners for a long space of time, is censured and proscribed by the church, and is virtually or equivalently condemned by our blessed Redeemer, in the parable of the prodigal, whose father immediately on his return, re-

ceives him into favour: and the moment he forgives, he admits him to the feast. A striking image is here of the sacraments of penance and of the Eucharist.

The incestuous Corinthian whom S. Paul had excommunicated, was by the same apostle, speedily restored to the participation of holy things, on account of the intense sorrow which he expressed for his sin: the rest of his brethren were desired to pay him every charitable attention, and afford him every comfort in his distress. Who will say that S. Paul was not actuated by the spirit of his master?

We read also that the loving and beloved S. John, having brought a young man to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, placed him for a while, under the care of an Asiatic bishop, the bet-

ter to preserve him in the fear of God. The youth however fell from his first fervor, and gradually became so profligate, as to head a nest of robbers, who, taking possession of a mountain, difficult of access, infested the neighbourhood with plunder and rapine. Meanwhile, the apostle happened to meet with the bishop to whose care he had consigned the unhappy man, and asked what was become of him : the prelate replied that he was dead : dead ! said the other, of what sort of death ? he is dead to God. At which the apostle rent his garment, sighed and groaned, saying, " I cannot doubt but " I left in you a faithful guardian of " the soul of your brother ; let me " have a horse directly, and a guide to " shew me the way." The holy man with all speed made to the mountain, but being interrupted by the sentinel,

he desired to be brought before his captain, and his request was complied with. The captain sternly waited for his approach with sword in hand, but on discovering who his visitor was, shame and confusion took place of his fierceness, and set him to flight. The saint followed him, and in paternal accent said, "My son, why do you fly?" "Why do you fly from your father," "from an harmless defenceless old man? My son, take pity on me; fear not, you may still hope for salvation: I will be your caution with Jesus Christ, I will pawn my soul for yours, believe me and stop." At these words he yielded and stopped: trembling, sorrowful and bathed in tears, he threw himself at the feet of his friendly pursuer, who received him with open arms, and mingled his tears of joy with those which compunction

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had forced from his repenting child. He animated and consoled him with all paternal solicitude; and Eusebius* assures that he did not leave him till he had restored him to the church, and to a participation of the sacraments.

Tertullian informs us †, that the Roman Church admitted to the sacraments, at two different times, the heresiarks, Marcion, and Valentin, on the acknowledgment of their errors, and Marcion had a promise of pardon, for a third relapse, but a sudden death deprived him of the full fruition of it.

S. Ireneus relates that Cerdon, another heresiark, had been often, on his repeated resipiscence, made partaker of the communion of the church. Nor was he ever condemned to trials of long duration, or to any public

* Euseb. l. 2. Hist. Eccles. c. xvii.

† Tertul. l. de præscrip. c. xxx.

penance. This mode of atonement, was not at that period in use: at no time indeed was it ever more than an accidental ceremony, which was as wisely introduced at one period, as it was prudently dropped at another. The true spirit of penance, though it has occasionally assumed various forms, has, in all ages, invariably been the same. Every repenting sinner was always bound to detest and confess his sins, as well as to satisfy and atone for them: nor is this atonement so very easy and practicable as some may imagine. We do not very readily manifest our many weaknesses and miseries, especially when self-accusation puts us to shame: a sovereign aversion to sin, a serious reparation of past scandal, a complete restitution of unlawful property, a reparation of injured virtue and fame, a perfect reconciliation with

all the world, and a total forgiveness of every injury, make up the compound character and spirit of penance, which, upon reflection, will not readily be allowed to be of an easy acquisition. It is however an acquisition absolutely necessary, whilst at the same time it is entirely sufficient for communion. The Fathers exacted no more, and several of them zealously reprimanded such Bishops and Pastors, as imprudently with-held their flock from absolution and the Eucharist.

S. Leo writes to Bishop Theodore :
“ We must not be difficult in the
“ distribution of the gifts of God,
“ neither are we to overlook the sighs
“ and tears of self-accusing sinners,
“ especially when we may hope that
“ the desire they have formed of be-
“ ing reconciled to their Maker, pro-

“ceeds from his merciful inspira-
“tion.”

The same Saint is still more emphatical, in his letter to the Bishops of Vienna: “Communion is not easily
“to be refused to any Christian . . .
“A soul in whose behalf the blood
“of Jesus Christ has been shed, is
“not to be afflicted with so severe a
“chastisement, which would render
“her defenceless before her enemies,
“and expose her too openly to the
“fury of their darts.”

S. Prosper coincides in opinion with the former*, and by a fresh reason by which he supports it, shews how justly he linked discretion with zeal: “If the weak and infirm are de-
“prived of communion, because they
“are somewhat indocile and un-
“tractable, they either will sink un-

* Prosp. l. 2. de contemptu.

“ der the weight of an excessive grief,
“ which will render vain the efforts
“ of their pastors to bring them back
“ to their duty, or they will give
“ themselves up to a licentious way
“ of life, which will render their sal-
“ vation desperate.”

The great St. Chrysostom says:
“ Let no one tell me, my conscience
“ is loaded with sins: the space of
“ these five days, is sufficient to re-
“ pent in, provided that you are so-
“ ber, watchful and attentive to di-
“ minish the number of them, and to
“ amend your faults: be in no pain
“ concerning the shortness of time,
“ only reflect that the Lord is merci-
“ ful. The Ninevites, in the course
“ of three days, deprecated from their
“ heads the vengeance of heaven.*”

* Chrys. Hom. de. S. Pigon. T. I.

And elsewhere he says : “ One day
“ alone is enough to purify and
“ sanctify our souls ; nay, we may
“ amend and get well, in less than
“ an hour †.”

St. Augustin entertains the same sentiments of mercy : “ Although our
“ repentance be but of short standing,
“ if we have entered upon it with
“ bitterness of heart, we must firmly
“ hope for forgiveness : for our Lord
“ attends more to the sincerity of our
“ heart, than to the space of time.”

But a mistaken reverence for communion, will still insinuate, that it seems more decent, and more becoming a penitent sinner to abstain from this awful mystery, till he gains strength and acquires a competent degree of virtue and holiness, which

† Hom. de Perdit. Judæ. T. 5.

would render him more worthy, and his communion more fruitful.

This, however, like every other motive for retardment, is void of all solidity and reason. I might as well advance that a man, who is on his recovery from a fit of sickness, had better wait for a perfect recovery, before he begins to take proper nourishment. A sincere penitent, although penitent, is doubtless weak and feeble: and this heavenly food is designedly intended for him, that he may recover his strength. Whilst he is debarred from it, he ever will languish. *I am the bread of life, that he who eats of it, may not die.* The Eucharist therefore is, as the Council of Trent expresses it, the health and the strength of our souls, and the primary design of its institution was at once to nourish us and shield us from sin. If we abstain

from it, we shall be languid and unguarded from evil: if we receive it often, we bid defiance to our worst of enemies.

“ It will be more or less with you
“ if you communicate often, says St.
“ Francis of Sales, as it was with Mi-
“ thridates, who through fear of be-
“ ing poisoned, used himself daily to
“ a certain quantity of poison, which
“ so much invigored him, that when
“ he would be poisoned, he could not
“ effect it.

“ If mankind, continues this saint,*
“ might have preserved their bodily
“ lives, by means of the tree of life,
“ which God had placed in the ter-
“ restrial Paradise; why may not
“ Christians preserve their spiritual
“ lives, by means of this bread of

Devout Life, c. 20.

z 3

“ life? A little honey or sugar con-
“ serves most delicate and perishable
“ fruits, such as cherries, strawberries
“ and apricocks. Where then is the
“ wonder, if our souls, how weak so-
“ ever they may be of themselves,
“ should be preserved from the cor-
“ ruption of sin, when once they have
“ been penetrated with the virtue and
“ sweetness of the incorruptible blood
“ of Jesus Christ.” There are then no
means so powerful and efficacious to
preserve a penitent sinner in grace
and in virtue, as frequent communion.
It was through this help, that the
above-mentioned saint, converted a
multitude of sinners into eminent
saints. In so doing, he followed the
example of the apostles, and of all apos-
tolic men in every Christian age. St.
Vincent Ferrerius, St. Philip of Neri,
St. Cajetan, St. Vincent of Paul, St.

Francis Xavier, employed this sacrament with the greatest success, for the reformation and sanctification of their neighbour.

Notwithstanding these many striking proofs, which assert the propriety of frequent communion, it still has its opponents, who by various arguments, as well as through various motives, endeavour to withdraw mankind from the chief source of their happiness. It should seem, they will say, reasonable, that a great sinner should proportion the severity of his penances to the magnitude of his former guilt; it consequently should seem reasonable, that as communion is the greatest of favors, to refrain from it would be the greatest of punishments.

The fallacy of this argument is laid open by St. Ambrose: "Those who
" abstain from the divine sacrament,

“ from a spirit of penance, are severer
“ on themselves than they should be ;
“ for while they inflict on themselves
“ this punishment, they deprive them-
“ selves of a most efficacious remedy.”

Besides, are we to believe that the idea of christian repentance and atonement for sin, is confined to a life of solitude, to fasting, hair shirts, and other bodily macerations ? These are, indeed, helps, they are very conducive to a penitential spirit, but they are not the constituents of it : the love of God, the practice of christian virtues, the mortification of the inward man, the suppression of the irregular sallies of passion, a moderation in prosperity, a resignation in adversity, a reference to God in every action, are the soul and life of this excellent virtue ; to the acquisition and practice of which, as no help is so conducive as frequent com-

munion, so no virtuous deed is so great an ingredient to it, as this same holy action frequently repeated.

Some stern and severe-minded people, freely stigmatize this facility of admitting sinners to the sacraments, as a laxity in morals, and a deviation from proper discipline. But what conduct is there in life, how prudent and perfect soever it may be, which is not exposed to obloquy, and liable to groundless censure and reproach? Such meek, however, and tender-hearted pastors, who are thus indulgent, have every motive of comfort in the thought, that the milder they are with a penitent delinquent, the more perfect is their resemblance with their divine Master, who was meekness itself to every sinner, and disdained not familiarly to mix and converse with them. And, though the Pharisees were lavish

in their calumnies against him, as overstretching and subverting the Mosaic law, he continued in the same mild and paternal tenor, and even more loudly proclaimed to the world, "That he
" was not come for the righteous,
" but for sinners : and that those who
" were in health, stood not in need
" of a physician, but such only as
" were sick. I am for mercy, and I
" reject your offerings : white-washed
" sepulchres outwardly, within you
" are pure corruption ; an exterior
" shew of penance, is most to your
" taste, as it dazzles the eyes of men,
" it brings home to you their esteem.
" For my part, I am for the penitence
" of the heart ; my yoke is sweet, and
" my burthen is light : as to you, you
" impose on others enormous loads,
" which you yourselves will not touch,

“ not even with the tip of your
“ fingers.”

The spirit of rigorism has been at all times ostensive in heretics : witness the Mountanists, the Novatians, Tertullian and others. The spirit of meekness has ever been the distinctive mark of all truly apostolical men, and in our latter days it was the peculiar characteristic of St. Francis of Sales : who once being told, that some took scandal at the ease and condescension which he used with sinners, made answer, that he thought it was better to make sinners penitent, than to make them desperate : I had rather lead them gently to purgatory, than drive them rashly to hell. But it was replied, one may damn himself through too great a condescension : to which he said, with a smile, if damnation must be the consequence of an excessive indulgence, and an over-

flow of kindness, I would prefer the loss of heaven, occasioned by such an excess, to damnation, which should be the effect of excessive harshness and severity. S. Odilon was of the same sentiment, and expressed himself almost in the same words, as we read in the history of his life, written by Peter Damian. These great saints thought with, and held the language of St. Paul. who wished to be accursed, for the sake of his brethren.

When our blessed Lord sent his apostles to convert the world, he did not say, learn from me to create new worlds, to raise the dead, or to rebuke sinners, but learn from me to be meek and humble of heart. I send you like sheep and like lambs in the midst of wolves : and those approved themselves truly apostolical, who, by their meek-

The 4th Sunday of Advent.
 have ye the way of the Lord, make
 On frequent Communion. 273 straight-
 ness, changed the wolves themselves his father
 into the nature of lambs. one great end of

CHAPTER XIII.

*Frequent Communion is the most power-
 ful and efficacious Help to Salvation.*

THE greatness of the end which our
 dear Lord proposed to himself, when
 he was pleased to institute this won-
 derful sacrament, must, doubtless, bear
 a proportion with the greatness of that
 power and bounty which are displayed
 as often as he admits us to his sacred
 table: nay, it even seems that this
 merciful design, of establishing a most
 intimate union with his creatures, is
 still greater and more astonishing than
 the mighty exertion of his power. A
 design like this is the fairest opening
 to all the treasures of heaven, and by

giving us, as our nourishment, his adorable body and blood, he lifts us up to his own level, and together with himself, he makes us partakers of all that he himself is in possession of; so that we become, in the language of the Royal Prophet, *like Gods**, or, as St. Peter expresses it, *you are partakers of the Divine nature.*†

The flesh of a God is truly our food, and this inestimable food imparts immortality, and a life divine. “As I live for my Father, so he that eats of my flesh, shall for me, and through me, live of a life everlasting and divine, he shall dwell in me, and I in him.” Actuated by an excess of an incomprehensible love, Jesus Christ, under the sacramental veils, hiddenly communicates to every ~~parti-~~

one

* Ps. 81.

† *Divinæ consortes naturæ.* 2 Pet. i.

~~cular~~, while on earth, his divine nature, as a pledge of that open and full communication both of himself and of all his glory, which awaits us in the abodes of eternal bliss. Wonderful was his love, when, at the incarnation, he assumed the nature of man ; but yet more wonderfully is this love displayed, when he gives himself to all men, as a life-giving nourishment. When he first came, he only united himself to our common nature ; upon leaving us, he chose to be united ~~after~~ a real and a most intimate manner to each of us in particular.

Holy communion, therefore, is of all favours the greatest which the Creator can bestow on his creature ; it is the choicest blessing, and the best of gifts : and to those who frequently partake of it, it is the most powerful and efficacious help to salvation. The

sacraments of baptism and of penance; are great marks of an unbounded love, and greatly forward our happiness ; the one frees us from original, the other from actual guilt. Both also confer actual grace, but not always for any length of time sufficient to preserve us in the love and fear of our Maker : besides those two sacraments, another was requisite, whose peculiar virtue it should be to support our weakness, and preserve us from danger ; and this, through the eucharistic bread, is admirably well effected. This strengthening food confirms us in, and greatly adds to the graces which penance obtains ; it revives the languid, invigours the weak, rouses the tepid, and animates the most timid to the boldest virtue. Frequent communion therefore is transcendently that great help, to which is annexed perseverance in grace,

that only sacrament, which of its own nature, has power and efficacy sufficient to preserve a soul, for any space of time, from the deadly contagion of sin.

The words of our Redeemer are an irrefragable proof*. “ My flesh is
“ truly food: it is the bread of life ;
“ he who shall eat of it, shall live for
“ ever, and shall not die the death of
“ sin without this bread, you
“ shall not have life in you.” And the infallible criterion of the meaning of our Lord, the interpretation of the church, assures us, that the Eucharist is intended as the spiritual food of Christians, and as an antidote, which at once frees us from our daily faults, and preserves us from mortal commissions, and consequently preserves us in grace.

* John vi.

The other sacraments, though they confer grace, are at best but foreign vehicles of it, but in the Eucharist, Christ in person bestows grace, gives life, and wards off death : where he dwells, there is holiness itself, joined to an infinite aversion to sin.) The Philistines placed the ark of the covenant in the temple of Dagon : but the impious statue was soon found prostrate at the foot of the ark : being restored to its former state, the following day it was found disfigured and maimed. If the bare type of this great sacrament produced such wonderful effects, what virtue and efficacy may we not hope for, from a frequent participation of the reality ? || Communion, more efficaciously than any other means, saps and destroys the empire which vice and bad habits too naturally assume over us, and has a parti-

cular tendency to the subversion of self-love, the grand source of our many miseries. When we communicate often, we often enjoy the presence and power of the gracious and benevolent Jesus, who, during his mortal life, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, health to the sick, life to the dead, and inward peace to those who were tormented by devils. The hand of the Lord is not less kind now, than it was then; the same and similar blessings will continue to flow from the same source, if we approach to it with confidence. “ Virtue went out from him, and healed all*.”

“ If God,” says the apostle †, “ takes our part, what enemy can molest us?” And if God frequently reign within us, what harm can befall

* Luke vi. 19.

† Rom. viii.

us? He therefore is strong indeed, whom Jesus Christ shields with his presence; as, on the contrary, weak and unfortified must he be, who shuns his heavenly presence or seldom communicates. Invincible is the Christian in his spritual warfare, who is thus protected, because from communion, he derives more succour, than by any other established means of salvation. By eating this food, he is strictly united to Christ, nay, is transformed into his Redeemer, and therefore may say with S. Paul*, "It is no longer I, but it is Jesus Christ who lives in me." He lives in him, makes himself over to him, and profusely bestows on him every other blessing: in other means, he sets bounds to his liberality: in the Eucharist, Christ gives himself in person with all his treasures, unlimited in his

* Gal. ii. 20.

promises, unlimited in his love, unlimited in his gifts. Moreover, as communion, upon the removal of mortal sin, was designed as an infallible application of the merits of Christ, it must, of its own nature, produce a grace which will be victorious over every inordinate affection, and will furnish the soul with most powerful helps to triumph over her natural inconstancy, and the rudest attacks she can be exposed to. The sunny beams in an unclouded atmosphere, do not so powerfully enlighten, purify and warm the earth, as Jesus Christ in the Eucharist enlightens, warms and transports the soul who is disengaged from mortal sin.

It is however true, that as the influence of the sun is proportioned to the cultivation of the soil, so the effect, which results from communion,

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^{in proportion}
is ~~analogous~~ to the dispositions of the communicant: where there is no mortal sin, it always confers grace. But this grace is more or less valuable and precious, as we are more or less holy and pure. The Eucharist produces this effect in common with other sacraments: but, moreover, it bestows a sacramental specific grace, (as the divines express it,) which is peculiar to itself, and is a grace of spiritual refec- tion, or spiritual nourishment, according to the words of our Redeemer, *my flesh is truly food.*

He that eats of my flesh, dwells in me, and I in him: that is, when we communicate, we receive the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ: the former leaves us when the species are consumed; the latter continues to abide in us, and we abide in it. The divinity dwells in us with an additional

love, which continues to nourish our mind with pious thoughts and desires, with fresh illustrations, and devout sentiments ; all which, at seasonable occurrences, prompt us to virtue, and forward us to perfection.

This singular power and efficacy of frequent communion, is also the most conspicuous help which is given us to salvation, whether we consider it previously or subsequently to the reception of it : in both lights, it equally presents itself to our view, as wonderfully exciting to the holiest disposition and the most heroical virtues. In fact, what a diligent preparation will not the following thought be productive of ? to day, I am to receive my God. What care and attention, what sorrow and compunction must be the result of it ? Even on the eve of that happy day, there is more recollection,

more prayer, a closer, and a more serious communication with the God of mercy.

After communion, the presence of a God at once fills us with humility, and transports us with love : our hope and confidence, after so striking a pledge of bounty, move towards a degree of certainty of obtaining every blessing ; and as our faith revives and brightens, we are animated with the tenderest sentiments of gratitude : silent are our passions on this awful occasion, while all the powers of our soul unite to adore him in person, and freely consecrate themselves in future, to the glory of his holy name. A visit from a God ! what ^{powerful} ~~pleasant~~ impression must ~~not~~ this consideration make, even on a soul immersed in tepidity ? How efficaciously must it ~~not~~ engage us in future, to follow the exhortation of the

Apostle, that despising all worldly desires, we may lead a sober, righteous and pious life, in full hope of that great glory, of which this sacrament has given us the greatest foretaste. The oftener therefore we partake of it, the oftener shall we be in those happy dispositions, the more habituated shall we be to every virtuous sentiment, and godly desire.

Penetrated with, and well convinced of this great truth, St. Chrysostom loudly proclaims that, "We come from this sacred table * like lions, strong and animated with the fire of divine love, and even most formidable to the infernal host." This adorable and life giving food, has en-

* *Tamquam leones flammâ spirantes ex hac mensâ discedimus, terribiles facti diabolo.* Hom. 61. ad pop. Antioch.

abled millions of martyrs to triumph over the sharpest torments, and death itself in all its most ghastly shapes : it has raised thousands of tender virgins above the weakness of their sex, and brought them to the height of the most heroic virtue : instead of anguish and despair, it has given comfort and even inexpressible sweetness to thousands, who were seemingly oppressed with every species of woe, and were drinking to the dregs, the cup of every human adversity and misfortune : it has been the support and life of apostolical men, in their tedious and painful labours : it has encouraged anchorites in their fastings and austerities, and sweetened their lonesome solitudes : it has preserved from the general corruption of the world, thousands of fervorous Chris-

tians, whilst it has brought others back to their duty, and established them victorious over their most inveterate habits and evil inclinations. From these, and similar pious considerations, the holy Church pours forth the following Canticle, "The faithful and
" the servants of God are multiplied
" by virtue of this heavenly wheat.*"

Such then is the Evangelical system, which our Lord has established concerning our daily bread. Our spiritual weakness is so great, that, like our bodily wants, we stand in need of a particular help to preserve for a length of time, the life of our soul; this assistance is the holy Eucharist, which is also the commencement of life everlasting. But as the bare lighting up

* *Ex adipe frumenti multiplicati sunt fideles.*
Ex Off. SS. SS.

a lamp would not produce a lasting flame without a continued supply of oil; and as boiling water, if long removed from the fire, would soon return to its ~~for its~~ ^{pristine} coldness; in like manner is a Christian frequently to communicate, if he would preserve the light of grace, and keep up the fire of divine love. He who enters upon this holy practice, will soon experience the powerful influence of so great a sacrament, and the wonderful increase of his faith, of his hope and of his charity. In short, he who eats of the flesh of the son of man, shall live the life of Christ, that is, shall be like-minded with him.

It is therefore greatly to be wished that those who are charged with the important care of souls, would imitate, in their conduct with their flock, the example of the angel who ap-

that all others would imitate

~~peared to~~ the prophet ~~Elisha~~: the fugitive prophet, greatly apprehensive of the wrath of Queen Jesabel, had walked in the deserts so long and so precipitately, that, at last quite weary and spent, he laid down and slept. Mount Horeb was the place which the Lord had ordered him to retire to for safety, but from where he then was, he had a journey to take of forty long days and nights. While thus at rest, an Angel came and waked him, saying, ^{Arise} ~~rise~~ ~~and eat~~ and eat: he looked and ~~saw~~ a loaf of bread (which had been baked in ashes) and by it a pitcher of water: he eat and drank of what was before him, and again went to sleep: the Angel spoke to him, a second time and said, ^{thou hast} rise and eat, for ~~long yet~~ ^{way to go} ~~is your journey~~. He did as he was commanded, after which he began his journey, and by virtue of that refresh-

ment, he performed it with ease and alacrity, and reached the mountain of God, Horeb. This bread was a type of the eucharistic banquet : what assistance may we not hope for from this substantial repast, in our road to the eternal mansions of bliss, while a faint emblem of it supported the Prophet, during forty days and forty nights ?

Thus then should Christians be spoken to, when the question is to exhort them to communion : if you be sincerely penitent, if you shun the occasions of sin, and dread the allurements of vice, rise and eat, not of a bread which is brought you by an Angel of the Lord, but by the Lord himself ; eat of the blessed Eucharist, and eat of it often, and your repentance will be lasting, your alarms of danger will disappear, from weak, you will become strong, and from tepid, you

will become fervorous: this heavenly bread virtually contains every help, removes every obstacle, imparts every blessing. And you timorous souls, who readily tire in the path of virtue, you whom the length of the journey, or the obstacles which you either meet, or apprehend to meet with, so easily terrify, you who lose courage at the shadow ~~of a cross~~ temptation, or any sort of trial, rise and communicate often, the bread you will eat, is the bread of the strong and of the robust: it will lift you up above your former weakness, and even above yourselves, and will teach you to look down with contempt upon every obstacle to salvation. In short, (I would wish to be heard by all who inhabit the Christian world, whom I earnestly exhort to communicate often) you have no means given you so efficacious as frequent

communion to facilitate the way to happiness, no means so powerful as frequent communion to secure to you the possession of happiness. (This eucharistic virtue not only affects and transforms a Christian soul after a most wonderful manner, but frequently also has alone supported in perfect health, the bodies of several servants of God, for a considerable length of time. It is what we read of S. Sabas Abbot, S. Catharine of Siena, the abbot S. John, and of many other holy recluses, who, for months, lived on no other food, than this most adorable sacrament.

CHAPTER XIV.

Frequent Communion is our greatest Comfort and Happiness in the Way of Salvation.

I KNOW not by what kind of spirit those people are actuated, who are for ever offering to Christian ears and eyes austere duties to be discharged, hard and severe obligations to be fulfilled, and who, seemingly unmindful of the many comfortable truths, which the law of grace, above every other, most graciously affords, are busy in colouring our happy state, with truths only alarming and terrifying. We by no means are thus tutored and informed by our merciful Redeemer, who comfortably assures us that the tender name, which by way of excellency,

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our God is pleased to assume over us, is that of father ; and his will is, that in our prayers, our address should begin with that endearing appellation. Jesus Christ styles himself our brother, our physician, the lamb who takes away the sins of the world, and a shepherd so faithful and loving, as to give his life for his flock. His gospel is the reign of the God of bounty : the reign of mercy and of peace. He demands and claims our love, because he first loved us, and still continues to love us : and if we return love for love we infallibly engage him to secure our happiness. His yoke is sweet, and whatever burden he imposes on us, conveys peace and joy. *You shall find rest unto your souls.* Rejoice, says the apostle, and I repeat it, be extremely glad, because the Lord is near and close at hand : and the royal prophet

emphatically invites us all to serve God with alacrity and joy.

The Christian, therefore, must be very inattentive to the great advantages of his holy religion, who views it only in the light which terrifies him, or suffers himself to be disheartened at the apparent difficulty of salvation. Let him only reflect on the incomparable blessings which accrue from frequent communion, and he will be forced to own, that, independently of all other means, he is here furnished not only with the most powerful, but also with the most easy and most comfortable help to salvation.

This pleasing truth will clearly shew itself if we compare the advantages, which are peculiar to the Eucharist with the difficulty which attends other gospel rules and counsels, though they are equally pointed out as means

to happiness. Continual prayer and fasting, an absolute and general self-denial ; a contempt of the world and of all that belongs to it ; a free abnegation of will and of property which is to be made the inheritance of the poor ; a perpetual recollection, and an invariable attention to the most painful and humiliating deeds of mercy : an uniform meekness and moderation and the strictest virginal chastity ; at these and such, like proposals, self-love takes the alarm, and weak nature startles and recoils.

Whereas frequent communion, a repeated intimacy and union with Jesus Christ, is a smoother path and better accommodated to our extreme weakness : love guides us in every step, and where love is, there, neither pain nor labour is found. Taste and you will experience in frequent communion a ple-

itude of sweetness, which is peculiar to the Lord our God, especially when he gives himself in the Eucharist. Here we receive correction for our failings, but the reprimand is paternal; our wounds are healed, but gentle and almost imperceptible is the hand that effects the cure: our hearts are purified, but unfelt is the violence which is used to purify us: we divest ourselves of the old and put on the new man, but nothing intervenes forbidding in the change; we become victorious almost without combat. Communion imperceptibly withdraws, and even separates us from ourselves, and no convulsion is felt in the separation: it detaches us from every earthly object, and unites us to our Creator; and pleasing is the translation of our affections from one object to the other. Make experiment of it, communicate

often : you will discover it to be a sovereign remedy against every evil, an inexhaustible source of every heavenly delight, for so does the Church proclaim it, *panem de cælo præstitisti eis, omne delectamentum in se habentem*. Thousands have acknowledged, and thousands daily continue to experience this truth.

I go further, and add, that holy communion, on account of the facility with which it may be received, is at times, almost the only means, which many Christians have in their power to make use of, to forward their salvation. Fervent and assiduous prayer, hardly can fall to the lot of those, whose station of life involves them in the bustle of worldly concerns ; family intralments, and unavoidable solitudes strongly oppose the quietude of much prayer ; liberalities to the poor, come within

the power of a few ; most are either poor themselves, or have families to provide for : fasting, and other corporal austerities become impracticable to infirm constitutions, and to those who are obliged to labour : idleness, the root of every evil, should be removed by a becoming occupation, and the dangerous rest and inactivity which attend on riches, should have their remedy to preserve the balance : to be sincere in the business of salvation, it seems expedient that you should quit the world, and take to retirement : but a wife and children compel you to continue in the hurry of life : the world, your affairs, and occupations, your situation in life, continually start new obstacles, and, as you advance in years, difficulties grow under your steps ; what remedy, what help can you find in so great a distress ? the only means

left for several, the only means which bear any proportion with their weakness, and with the dangers they are exposed to, is frequent communion. The poor and the rich, the sword's-man and the pen-man, the mechanic and merchant, the married and unmarried, the healthy and sick, all may conveniently partake of this adorable sacrament, and all may draw from it every suitable succour, without detriment to constitution, inattention to family, neglect of employ, or necessity of retiring from society : no impossibility, nor yet difficulty can reasonably be alledged in the use we should make of the Eucharist, for every one may communicate often, with all imaginable facility.

Inexcusable, therefore, must those Christians be, who suffer themselves to linger and die spiritually, for want of this heavenly nourishment, whilst it is

the readiest and the best preservative from sin.

But, waiving for the present the other means of salvation and their respective difficulties, let us consider the advantage of frequent communion, without analogy, as it is in itself; even in this light it will evidently appear to be the sovereign happiness of man during his mortal pilgrimage.

In fact, what do we actually aspire to, and what is at present the chief object of our warmest wishes? it is, I presume, the fruition of God, and the full possession of him in the abodes of bliss: but while our hopes are protracted, and while we continue in the pleasing expectation of that moment which, by a happy dissolution, is to crown our wishes, we cannot but acknowledge, that, for the present, our greatest happiness, is to possess this God

in his sacrament, in which he has wonderfully veiled the awful effulgence of his infinite Majesty, the better to enable us to approach him in our mortal bodies, to partake of the treasure of his graces, and taste the charms of his divinity. O ! incomprehensible goodness of our loving God ! Never was a people so blessed and exalted as we are ; we may possess, at pleasure, the delight of angels, and enjoy, at will, the rapturous bliss of heaven ! what heart can extend its wishes beyond an enjoyment like this, and who would not taste daily of this torrent of pleasure, whilst there lived in his breast a spark of charity ?

The extasies and visions which the lives of saints furnish us ideas of, are sometimes stimulating motives to tread in their footsteps : we admire the wonderful condescendence of the Most

High in favour of his faithful servants, and, were it not for a conscious unworthiness on our part, we could almost wish to bear a resemblance with them. But great as these favours may seem, they fall infinitely short of the benefit of the Eucharist, in which there is not a bare vision, but a personal visit from Jesus Christ. One communion alone, eminently transcends, in price and value, all such extraordinary raptures and delights.

We may have often wished that, like Magdalen, we might bewail our sins at the feet of our Redeemer, or like Martha, that we could afford him lodging and food, or, like the apostles, that we had been brought up at his school, or, like Joseph and Simon, that we had carried him in our arms, or, like Joseph and Mary, we had been spectators of his divine conduct: ah!

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Christians, exclaims S. Chrysostom, why form ye these vain wishes? "In the Eucharist there is* the same Jesus Christ whom you lodge in your heart, and by frequent communion, you daily renew the same mysteries of tenderness and love. You see him, you touch him, you eat him." Envy not therefore, a Magdalen, Martha, or the apostles, Joseph or Mary: fortunate is the nation of Christians! a God comes daily upon earth, to inebriate them with ineffable delights †!

Happy, ten times happy is the Christian, who frequently feasts at this heavenly banquet: his lot, in one

* Vellem ipsius formam aspicere, vestimenta ecce eum tangis vides, manducas: ipse vero tibi concedit, non tantum videre, verum et manducare et tangere et intra te sumere.

Chrysost. hom. 6.

† Calix meus inebrians quam præclarus est.

Psal. xxii.

sense, is preferable to that of the spirits above: each communion adds to his happiness, each communion, by redoubling his love, gives new lustre to his future crown of glory. He sweetly and leisurely drinks, with growing merit, of the same inebriating cup, which incessantly holds in raptures the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem; and closely unites himself to the God of all comfort, while the God of all comfort, unboundedly communicates himself to him. Careless and unmindful of all but of his God, he sees, hears and lives but for him. He knows no expression, which breathes not forth love; nay, often destitute of expression, he is tenderly compelled to a more amorous silence. Those fervorous souls, who have often fed at this delicious repast, are no strangers to my meaning: Jesus Christ takes

possession of them, reigns over them, and lives in them; he lifts up their thoughts to heaven, inspires them with a contempt of the world, rectifies their inclination, moderates their appetites, and gradually, though insensibly transforms them into himself.

Thus, when an earthly prince pitches on a spot of ground for a resort of relaxation and pleasure, how ungrateful soever the soil and situation may be, it presently assumes a new form, it becomes pleasant and delightful: every visit produces additional decoration, ornament and beauty. Whereas those places which are unfrequented and neglected by their masters, soon return to their pristine ungraceful state, and, in spite of their natural advantages, lose every attraction and charm.

But the most wonderful effect which flows from this heavenly banquet, is that admirable ease and facility, with which we are enabled to practise every Christian duty, though never so unpleasant and reluctant to nature. In fact, who has not experienced, that on the day of communion, prayer, solitude, recollection, and every restraining obligation, were devoid of irksomeness and disgust; their bitterness, on that occasion, was turned into sweetness, and their thorns into roses. The same shall we often experience, if we communicate often.

CHAPTER XV.

*Frequent Communion is vainly opposed
by Sinners as well as by some virtuous
People.*

THERE have been in every Chris-
tian age, both loose and fervent^{ent}
Christians, who, falling into the same
mistaken notion concerning religion
and the respect which is due to the
Eucharist, have acted in concert, by
abstaining from it: it seems there-
fore important to lay open the fallacy
they rest upon, and remove the dan-
gerous mask, which so plausibly main-
tains the appearance of rectitude. Some
of their most trite and prevailing pre-
texts shall now come under inspection;
which, when once we have removed,
the others, I trust, will be equivalently
confuted.

Some, with an apparent face of sanctity, hold the following language ; I do not, it is true, communicate often : but I obey the Church, and discharge my Easter-duty : the weight and multiplicity of my affairs do not permit a more frequent participation of the awful mysteries : but while I comply with church-discipline, I can entertain no scruple of deficiency in my obligations.

This mode of reasoning, obviously leads us to conclude, that worldly business is the chief employ of man, and that he answers best the end for which he is created, who is the most successful, or at least, the most diligent in his temporal concerns. Whereas the dictates of our religion directly contradict all such principles, and establish that salvation alone, is the only point that man should have in view ;

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which should he overlook or neglect, the possession of the world besides, would be entirely unavailable to him. Now what great solicitude can that man have for the welfare of his soul, who only once a year, thinks seriously of saving himself, and who only once a year makes use of those means, which are the most conducive to his salvation? That faith, must for ever be erroneous, which withdraws us from, and leads us not to Christ: he who rightly believes, who hopes and loves as a Christian ought to do, is not solaced by absence from, but by union with his Maker. How slender is the friendship between two neighbours, who visit each other but once in a year? How deficient in filial duty is that son, who, though frequently asked to his Father's table, accepts of the invitation but once in a twelve-month?

The truth is, those who limit their communion to Easter, are not led to ~~any~~ such restriction, by any religious principle: they are actuated by pride and self-love; by a fear of the censure of the world, perhaps even of the Church, who threatens excommunication, and a privation of holy burial: they are unwilling to appear to be what they really are, irregular in conduct, and devoid of religion: they are studious to preserve the good opinion of their wives, children, and friends, whilst in reality, their interest is their God, to which they prostitute all the powers of their soul: and therefore it generally follows, that those who habitually put off their communion to Easter, as they perceive their vicious habits, most commonly commit a sacrilege, because they are equally

indifferent about religion and the Author of it.

Another says, I unfortunately fell into sin a month after my last communion, my religion, which inspires me with the greatest veneration for the sacrament, prevented my speedier approach; ^{again to God} ~~that at~~ the following Easter.

The religious reverence which is here obtruded, is nothing more than positive ignorance. There can be no doubt, but that repentance should closely follow the sin, and communion repentance. Who in sound judgment, upon receiving a wound, delays sending for help, till months are expired? A third says: for years past I have not communicated; my religion has withheld me: the Eucharist is a most awful sacrament, and great is the preparation requisite to receive it: my veneration for it is too great,

not to dread an abuse: it is better to refrain, than communicate unworthily.

There is here much fallacy and hypocrisy, but no kind of reason or religion. One might as well say, it is better to die of hunger, than of poison: it is better to live in mortal sin, than sin mortally: it is better to be ~~damned~~ *lost* for a neglect of Easter-duty, than be *Con:* ~~damned~~ for an attempt to discharge it; where on both sides of the question there is only death, sin, and hell, nothing is better, or even good, all is bad, and bad in extreme. Between a sacrilegious communion, and no communion at Easter, there is the middle compound conduct, to communicate and to communicate worthily. This alone can be the result of true religion, whilst an open violation of the law of Christ and of his Church, is a palpable breach of our essential obligation. ~~I have~~

~~known~~ hundreds of hypocrites ^{have} to affect a great fund of religion, and a particular respect for the Eucharist, by which they ^{have} sometimes succeeded in imposing on the weak, and in obtaining the approbation of the ignorant : but were their religion real, and their respect genuine, their great care would be, to dispose themselves for, and not to shun the table of life. Their respect is for an idol of flesh, which they know not how to quit : it is for a criminal attachment, in which they are involved ; for ill-gotten goods, which they are unwilling to restore ; for a resentment, or a desire of revenge, which they harbour and foment ; these obstacles must be removed before they can communicate worthily, and as they are unwilling to remove them, their sinful passions evidently have the preference over the love of their christian duty.

A fourth seemingly more candid and sincere, acknowledges himself unworthy of communion, from a criminal habit unfortunately contracted : and because he retains a deep sense of religion, he refrains from a profanation of so great a sacrament. In this sort of language, there is a great abuse of terms : it is properly an extinction, and not a sense of religion, which withholds from communion a soul, who is thus miserably enthralled : for it is the very height of irreligion to perfer the object of our unruly passions to Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour. There can be no religion or faith left in the man, who is impious enough to say, that he had rather be separated from his God, than from the object of his crime ; and that he judges not his Saviour worthy of the sacrifice of his pleasure, and of his sinful attachment.

This determination of persisting in sin, rather than of taking any step to prepare for communion, is a preference most injurious to God, and a positive insult to his divine majesty. He who is come to this pass, most probably believes not in the real presence, or should he retain a spark of faith on that head, it resides on the lips, more than in the heart, as S. Paul expresses it, *they confess that they know God, but deny him in their actions**.

True religion, in as much as it concerns the blessed Eucharist, is that, says the council of Trent, which engages and disposes us to receive it worthily and frequently, by sacrificing to this important purpose, every human consideration†. It is the religion which

* Ep. ad Tit. i. 16.

† Omnes & singuli qui Christiano nomine censentur, hæc mysteria corporis & sanguinis dominici ea

is exacted by our Redeemer: *unless you eat of the flesh of the son of man, you shall not have life in you.*

I now come to the objections which some zealous, but mistaken Christians, as vainly make to frequent communion, as the hypocritical sinner may do, to cloak his irreligion. The dignity, they say, and holiness of this sacrament is such, that four thousand years would be an inadequate space of time, to a suitable preparation for so holy an action: it should therefore seem, that the greater the interval is, between one communion and another, the better, and more worthy must the communicant be.

S. Chrysostom however assures us, that the due disposition for commu-

fide & constantia & firmitate credant . . . ut frequenter suscipere possint.

Trid. Sess. 13. c. 8.

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nion, draws not its valuation from any space of time, but from purity of conscience. If the infinite dignity of the sacrament, be the direct and sole object of consideration, it will be readily granted, that no number of years can perfectly qualify us to receive it at any time : nevertheless, it is certain that those who communicate often, are in general better prepared, and more pleasing to God, than those who rarely correspond with the views of their divine master. A piece of green wood frequently ^{brought} ~~approached~~ to the fire, will, by gradual evaporation of moisture, become fit to take fire : Jesus Christ is a burning flame of love, the oftener we visit him, the more shall we be inflamed, by a gradual disincumbrance from earthly attachments. It is besides, a known truth, that one communion,

is by far the holiest and the best preparation for another.

But does not frequent communion insensibly lessen the respect which is due to this adorable sacrament? It is commonly said, that familiarity degenerates into contempt. This axiom holds good in relation to low and vulgar minds, who even without any near inspection, and at a distance, betray many weaknesses: but it is not so with great and virtuous souls, who grow on our esteem, from a better acquaintance with their good qualities. But even admitting that an intimacy with the most perfect man, should bring on indifference or disregard from the discovery of lurking blemishes, a familiarity with the God of heaven and earth, can admit of no such supposition: infinite is his grandeur, boundless is his majesty, numberless are his per-

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fections, the nearer we view them, the more powerfully do they command our esteem, the more forcibly do they excite our love. A repetition of our visit to him, as it brings on a new knowledge of that most ancient, yet ever recent bounty, inflames our love without lessening our respect : filial affection, and the greatest veneration are perfectly compatible with each other, and very admissible into the same breast. Frequent communion inspires a soul with the lowest and meanest sentiments of herself, and with the warmest and most respectful gratitude to the king of glory, who deigns to admit her to his table : but this respect how great soever it may be, redoubles her love, whilst her love alternately increases her respect for that God, who is at once great, and all bounteous. A frequent communicant

besides, is endowed with more helps, than those who are remiss in this holy duty ; he is therefore better able to pay all due attention to every motion of grace, and grace doubtless will teach him proper reverence and respect.

But it may be asked, whether a just and holy fear of the great majesty of God, should not withhold us from frequent communion, as it formerly withheld the Israelites from approaching to Mount Sinai? I answer that there is a fear which, originating from conscious guilt, causes us to fly from his formidable presence, and this fear is the result of sin, and seized our first parents on their transgression. “ I “ heard your voice in paradise, and I “ feared you, (1) Lord, and therefore I “ hid myself.” Thus, an unfaithful spouse dreads the presence of her husband ; an undutiful child shuns his

provoked parent : an awe like this is bad and prejudicial. There is another kind of fear which is commendable and praise-worthy, because it arises from an unwillingness of displeasing God, and an apprehension of incurring guilt in his sight : a fear like this has no tendency to withdraw us from the divine presence, but rather prompts us to enjoy it, the better to be screened from danger by its powerful influence. That awe alone therefore is salutary and desirable, which leads and excites us to frequent communion. It is a folly, says, Gerson, to abstain from communion through fear, while our conscience does not reproach us with mortal sin. The hope of meeting with succour, should be motive sufficient to engage us to go to him, who alone can give us comfort, and who purposely comes from heaven to be our support.

The law of Moses, that law of terror, is now no more : we more fortunately live under the benign influence of the law of grace and of singular mercy. Our God, like a most bountiful father, invites his children to eat freely, familiarly, and frequently at his table : he demands, and certainly commands respect, but yet, is more jealous of our love and confidence. If our fear be rational, and such as becomes a Christian, it never will keep us from, but will spur us to communion : and when it has a contrary effect, our only fear should be, lest we incur the threats which our Lord has denounced against those tardy Christians, who refuse to partake of his grand supper.

A further query may occur : is frequent communion advisable to a Christian, whilst he feels no sensible devotion, no relish or desire of com-

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munion, and even labours under a degree of indolence and tepidity, and a crowd of involuntary distractions ?

For a frequent participation of the divine mysteries, neither Jesus Christ or his Church have ever exacted a sensible devotion ; thousands of good and meritorious works are daily performed, independently of any perceptible relish or satisfaction : a sincere good will, an earnest desire of serving and pleasing God, is all he requires of us. Real and true devotion has no other constituents than a promptitude of will, an attention of mind, and a firmness of heart in the discharge of the duties incumbent upon us, in all which, nothing pleasing or naturally attracting need interfere. St. Bonaventure, Alger, and other holy doctors, clearly assert this doctrine : “ Commu-
“ nicate, notwithstanding this listles-

“ness, and seeming tepidity, these
“distractions and involuntary dissipa-
“tions; go and receive with confi-
“dence in God’s mercy.”* This
state of reluctance, as it is unpleasant
to self-love, serves only to increase in
us self-abasement, and further to
strengthen and confirm us in virtue.

The objection made to frequent
communion, taken from the considera-
tion of our many faults and imperfec-
tions, is clearly answered and removed
by Gerson in the following manner:
“He who refrains from communion
“because he is tepid or cold, resembles
“the man who should say, I keep

* S. quandoque tepidè, tamen confidens de
misericordiâ Dei fiducialiter accedat; nec ideo
prætermittenda est communio, si quandoque homo
non sentit specialem devotionis gratiam cum ad il-
lam se studet præparare. Bonav. l. de processu.
Rel. 7. proces. c. 2.

“ from the fire because I am cold, and
 “ because I am sick I will have no
 “ physician : whereas, the sick only
 “ require a physician, and such only
 “ as are cold, stand in need of warmth
 “ from the fire : the sacraments are
 “ medicinal, wherefore your infirmity
 “ has the greater occasion for them :
 “ Christ is a burning fire, if free from
 “ mortal sin, confidently approach
 “ him, he will kindle your heart into
 “ love.”*

“ Eat confidently, says St. Augus-
 “ tin,† of this heavenly bread, bring

* Qui ad hoc sacramentum non accedit quia tepidus est ac frigidus, similis est ei qui diceret : ad ignem non accedo quia frigidus sum, Medicum non requiro, quia infirmus sum. Sacramen-
 medicinæ sunt, etiamsi infirmus sis, accede. Christus ignis est etiamsi frigidus sis, dummodo in peccato mortali non sis, accede. Gerson de præ-
 par. ad Missam.

† S. Aug. Tract. 26. in Joan.

“ to the altar a well-intentioned mind,
“ and although your sins may be daily,
“ if they be not mortal, you have every
“ reason to hope that the Eucharist
“ will be an excellent food to you, and
“ no poison.”

There are others who conclude, that their communions must be useless and unprofitable, because they discover no progress they make in virtue and their transgressions, though only venial, are daily the same.”* St. Ambrose solves this difficulty, where he says,
“ Because I sin CONTINUALLY, I
“ CONTINUALLY stand in need of the
“ eucharistic medicine.” And the council of Trent teaches, “ That
“ our Lord instituted this heavenly
“ nourishment as a DAILY antidote
“ against our DAILY infirmities and

* L. 4. de Sacram. c. 6.

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“ faults.” *Sumi voluit ut antidotum, quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis.* Frequent communion therefore is not to be laid aside, nor to be supposed unprofitable, because our imperfections are daily : where communion is unfrequent, there are equally imperfections, and daily too, nay, in a greater number, and generally of a more serious nature. From the want of this daily food, human weakness increases, and the sins which consequently are occasioned by it, are by far more alarming, than those which a frequent communicant complains of. Repeated communion is a lasting preservative against mortal sin : and this consideration alone, is proof enough of the expediency, and even necessity of it : it also keeps us in the fear and in the love of God, and at each time, imparts fresh courage to subdue our restless passions. Should

our proficiency be imperceptible to us, as long as we are not conscious of a notorious neglect on our side, we should still preserve our peace of mind, by a patient acquiescence to the will of God : in heaven, I trust, we shall experience, that each one of our communions has purchased us a new crown, and additional degrees of felicity and glory : till we reach those mansions of bliss, let us rely on the goodness of God, and form our conduct on the dictates of faith. The greatest saints were unacquainted with the progress they made in virtue : nay, as they grew in perfection, they fell in their own valuation.

But some will say, are not our daily faults, and the many temptations and distractions we are subject to, sufficient proofs, that we are not in the grace

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of God, or at least, that we are not duly prepared for communion?

This question has amply been answered elsewhere ; yet to remove, as much as possible, every vain fear and groundless apprehension from timorous souls, I think proper to repeat, that the state of grace, and the most perfect love, are perfectly compatible with those disagreeable concomitants of our nature. The saints themselves were not free from them : but to them, they were cogent motives of an habitual humiliation, on the one hand, whilst on the other they induce them to frequent communion, as to the very best of remedies. A golden vase, ceases not to be gold because it is somewhat tarnished or dusty. If you communicate often, the gold of charity will soon brighten in you, and the dust of

your daily failings will insensibly disappear.

It still may be urged, that several, who communicate frequently and even daily, are more irregular in conduct, than many others who communicate well, but seldom.

To avoid sophism, the comparison should run between those who communicate well, and often, and those who communicate well, and seldom. Thus is the argument fairly stated : and I assert, that reason, authority and experience clearly demonstrate, that the former are more virtuous, and receive more graces than the latter. I also advance on the same foundation, that those who rarely communicate, will find it no easy task to persevere, for any length of time, in the state of grace : whilst those who make the Eucharist their daily bread, and receive

it worthily, move in a virtuous tract with facility and pleasure.

If we compare those who communicate ill, and often, with those who communicate ill, and seldom, the latter, doubtless are less criminal; but praise be to God, I exhort no one to any thing so enormous, as one bad communion. Who is ignorant, that a sacrilegious abuse of this kind is a treason of the blackest dye, a most injurious contempt of, and a most horrible insult offered to this adorable sacrament?

This topic is the proper and necessary theme for the pulpit, but falls wide of my present purpose.

I could however wish to proclaim to all the world, and in particular to the greatest sinners, that they grossly err, and greatly injure the all-bounteous providence of their Maker, as often as they despair of a reform of life, whilst they have it in their power to prepare

themselves duly for communion : great, wonderful, inexpressible is the efficacy which flows from it on a contrite heart; in as much, as one only communion has power and virtue enough to change the greatest sinner into an eminent saint.

As to the notion of those who rarely communicate on account of their unworthiness, it will not stand scrutiny and close examination. For if they style themselves unworthy, from the infinite disproportion, which essentially subsists between the Creator and the creature, in this light, nothing more is exacted than that we should communicate with a proper sense of our total dependance on our Maker. The mother of God was not free from this sort of unworthiness, as it is inseparable from the idea of a creature : this purest however of all creatures was the

object of God's great complacency, and, no doubt, set the example to the primitive Christians of daily communion. Or they style themselves unworthy, because their love for God is yet unpurified and mixed with imperfections; but as this kind of unworthiness is also inseparable from human nature, it only should be, when we communicate, an additional cause of humiliation, and never a reason for not communicating: could this deficiency authorise our forbearance, the angels alone could be duly qualified for the sacrament, which assertion positively clashes with the doctrine of the Church. Mortal sin is, absolutely speaking, that unworthiness alone, which should with-hold Christians from communion; while they are free from that, they unreasonably abstain from this necessary food. The opinion

of St. Cyril is no less instructive than it should be alarming to all such reasoners : “ It is proper to inform those “ who have been baptized and have “ received the grace of God, that, if “ they refuse to receive Jesus Christ “ in the holy mysteries, on account of a “ feigned religion, they exclude themselves from life everlasting :” And this their refusal, though it seems to take rise from a fund of religion, in reality is scandalous, and fraught with the greatest danger. There are two capital points, which all those who are in the state of grace, should invariably attend to and practise : let them with great confidence, communicate ~~very~~ often : let them communicate with an earnest desire of a daily amendment of life : and while they wish to correct their daily delinquencies, they should

reflect, that for this purpose, there are no means so efficacious as frequent communion.

CHAPTER XVI.

*No State or condition of Life can plead
Exemption from Frequent Communion.*

HAVING hitherto shewn the insufficiency of some personal obstacles to frequent communion, I now come to the refutation of such objections as arise from the various departments of life, in which we are respectively placed; none of which, I maintain, can afford excuse sufficient for frequent communion.

When our Lord promised to give us his flesh to eat, as the master-piece of all his wonders, they were the

Jews, who had assembled round him, to whom he made this gracious promise, and as some of them, from the harshness of the proposal, withdrew themselves from the crowd, instead of mitigating his first assertion, he emphatically declared to them all, “Un-
“ less you eat of my flesh, you shall
“ not have life in you.” Every Christian therefore, without distinction of state or condition, ought frequently to communicate. In the parable of the feast, among those who were invited to it, one alledged for excuse, a pair of oxen which he had to break-in, another a country-house which he had just bought, and a third, the marriage state he was newly engaged in ; but the master of the feast rejecting their excuses, threatened them with an absolute exclusion from his table in future.

or, in other words, from the kingdom of heaven.

The apostles indiscriminately, as to state or profession in life, gave daily communion to all the faithful. Poor and rich, women and men, old and young, partook of this heavenly food ; and the church in every age, has constantly invited all Christians in general, and every one in particular to the same refreshing table. “* Let all and every
“ one among Christians believe
“ with so lively and so firm a faith, as
“ to become worthy of FREQUENTLY
“ receiving these holy mysteries.”

As to those who are vested with the sacerdotal character, their obligation of frequent celebration, seems obvious and incontrovertible : the words, *do this in remem-*

* Trid. Sess. 13. c. 2.

brance of me, clearly shew it, and express a divine precept which the apostle makes mention of, and enforces, when he says, "As often as you eat
" of this bread and drink of this cup,
" you shall announce the death of our
" Lord, until he comes to judge the
" world." Jesus Christ therefore, and the apostles in his name, command all priests constantly and uninterruptedly to offer up the sacrifice of the mass to the day of judgment: *mortem Domini annuntiabitis donec veniat*: and the council of Trent declares, that the catholic church has ever understood and taught it in this light*.

This duty of frequent celebration, is grounded also on the exalted dignity of every priest, who is through his

* Ut offerrent præcepit per hæc verba; hoc facite in meam commemorationem; uti semper ecclesia catholica intellexit et docuit.

priesthood the minister of God, of Jesus Christ and of his church, the dispensator of his holy mysteries, and the mediator between man and his Maker. As God's minister, he is incessantly to promote his greater honor and glory by those means which are most conducive to that end, and nothing surely is so glorifying, as the immolation of a divine victim. As minister of Jesus Christ, he is continually to renew the death of this God-man, after an unbloody manner, and thus perpetuate among the faithful, the remembrance of the prodigy of his love for man. As minister of the church, he should studiously promote her interest, consult her welfare, and by his unrelenting piety, add daily to her lustre. As dispensator of God's holy mysteries, it is incumbent on him to distribute them to the faithful, ac-

according to their wants and exigencies : and finally as an intercessor for man who sins daily, daily, or at least frequent should be his offerings of propitiation, which, through the merits of Christ, procures pardon and forgiveness.

A good deal more might be said on this sacerdotal obligation, but having no reason to think that these sheets will fall into the hands of any one who is not sufficiently instructed in the duties annexed to his vocation, I shall conclude on this head with the opinion of S. Bonaventure*.

“ A priest in the state of grace, who
“ neglects the celebration of mass, as
“ far as in him lies, deprives the blessed
“ Trinity of the greatest glory, the
“ angels of the greatest joy, sinners

* D. Bonav. de Pæpar. Missæ

“ of the remission of their sins, the
“ righteous of grace, the suffering
“ souls of a mitigation of their pains,
“ the church of a singular blessing ;
“ he deprives himself of the best re-
“ medy for his daily failings, of an
“ increase of grace, of a more ample
“ forgiveness of his imperfections, of
“ an abatement of concupiscence, of
“ additional illustrations, of peace and
“ content of mind, of further union
“ with God, and of a greater help to
“ the practice of every virtue.”

Frequent communion is not less obligatory to religious people : and if some among the various orders which beautifully adorn the church of God, have not daily communion enjoined them by rule, it is nevertheless, what is universally counselled and generally practised in all religious orders of men, those who are in orders, sacrifice every

morning: and there are communities of women, especially of the visitation of the blessed sacrament, in which several of every convent communicate daily. And if, to avoid too great a restraint, daily communion is not in general, of strict rule and command, there is also no rule which forbids it. When Jesus Christ and his church exhort all the faithful to frequent communion, it should seem most rational to suppose, that religious people were more particularly spoken to, as their state of life is more peculiarly adapted to a strict union with God. The daily observance of their vows, their assiduity in prayer, in the recital of the divine office, their silence, recollection and self denial, contribute to form a preparation for communion, far superior to what is within the reach of the laity. They abandon all, to possess

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Jesus Christ, and by what means can they possess him, but by receiving him in his sacrament. By frequent and daily communion, they bring back and renew the fervor of primitive times: like the chosen people, God, in his mercy, has drawn them from the land of Egypt: he sends them a bread more heavenly than the manna, which they are to gather and to feed upon daily, and it is this choicest of blessings, which chiefly constitutes the singular happiness of a religious state.

But the comforts accruing from this divine manna, are no ways confined to the cloister and the convent. Those who live in the wide world, are equally invited to this heavenly banquet, and the obligation they are under of accepting the invitation, is, in one sense, greater than that of religious people, who are furnished with more

means for salvation, whilst they are less exposed to temptation and danger.

There are two classes of people in life, married and unmarried : both the one and the other stand in need of frequent communion. The latter are encompassed by many perilous snares, which frequently prove too fatal without this heavenly support : and as to the marriage state, which was first instituted by the Almighty, and since, has been raised to the dignity of a sacrament, it can be no obstacle to frequent communion. The primitive Christians, as S. Francis of Sales observes, although married, communicated daily : and the church of Christ has at no time excluded married people from frequent and even daily communion. On the contrary, we have elsewhere observed, that Pope Innocent, XI. positively forbids all bishops

pastors and directors to refuse even daily communion to merchants and married people, provided that they are in a state of grace, and in earnest in the business of salvation : whatever else may be said or read on this particular, is a mere matter of counsel.

Neither are the distractions, hurries, and avocations, which generally are inseparable from a family and from business, a sufficient obstacle to frequent communion : the following anecdote, relating to Sir Thomas More, lord chancellor of England, will elucidate what I advance. Several bishops whose faith and morals were on the decline, loudly exclaimed against the custom he had entered upon, of communicating daily, alledging that a layman, immersed as he was, in a multiplicity of worldly affairs, should shew more respect to the dignity of so great

a sacrament. To which his reply was—
“ The very reasons which you bring
“ to withdraw me from frequent com-
“ munion, are exactly those which in-
“ duce me to it: my dissipations are
“ great and many; and communion
“ brings on recollection; the occasions
“ of offending God present them-
“ selves daily, and I daily arm myself
“ against them by communion: I
“ stand in need of wisdom and pene-
“ tration to unravel, and conduct with
“ propriety and justice, several intri-
“ cate and perplexing matters; I there-
“ fore, every day, go and consult Je-
“ sus Christ in his holy sacrament.”

It was through the efficacious in-
fluence of this great sacrament, that
the primitive Christians were holy
merchants and mechanics, faithful
wives and husbands, trusty servants,
and dutiful children, edifying parents,

and disinterested arbitrators : from the same source of grace, the wealthy, in those days, were charitable to their distressed neighbour ; moderate in the midst of affluence, reserved and abstemious amidst the allurements of pleasure. The poor were content with their lot, and, in their poverty, they willingly resembled their indigent Master.

The afflicted also and the distressed, the sorrowful and unfortunate in life, more than most others, stand frequently in need of this sovereign remedy. The presence of their Saviour will lay the storm, will lighten their burthen, sooth their affliction, dispel all darkness, and strengthen them in battle : it is chiefly in distress, that communion is necessary. It was so foretold by the royal prophet. “ * Thou
“ hast prepared for me a table of re-
“ freshment, to enable me to oppose

* Psalm xiii.

“those who molest me.” This God of bounty, will dry up our tears, and enable us to bear up with suffering and affliction, if not immediately with joy, at least with patience and resignation.

On the other hand, the prosperous and the affluent, the great and dignified Christians, are equally under a necessity of making frequent application to this great channel of grace. The many snares with which they are surrounded, the various temptations which strongly allure them to forget themselves, and the Author of their existence, will, if duly considered, constitute something beyond a counsel, not to say a strict obligation of frequent communion, at least in some certain circumstances, which often attend an elevated and wealthy station.

There is, I know, another class of people, who, free from vice, and in-

clined to virtue, could wish often to communicate, but are drawn back by a latent dread of incurring blame and censure: they see the propriety as well as the advantage of this holy practice; but they are unwilling to appear singular, some even apprehend giving scandal. This is a snare which has been, actually is, and, I fear, will continue to be extremely prejudicial to thousands. The singularity which is here apprehended, purely originates from a decay of faith and of Christian fervor. In former times, it would have been a singularity, and even a scandal, not to have communicated often; although you may therefore be singular in the eyes of the present age, by frequently communicating, you only walk in the steps of your fervorous forefathers: which practice of the two, is the most eligible? besides, where is

the singularity, when you only avail yourself of your own right? Every son has a right to sit at his father's table: the sick only have occasion for a physician. If you be regular in conduct, and attentive to the discharge of the duties annexed to your state, you may possibly give an imaginary, but no real scandal. Should you be upbraided with your daily failings, S. Francis of Sales, bids you reply, that you communicate often, because you are imperfect, in hopes, through this excellent remedy, of daily growing better.

CHAPTER XVII.,

Of the Holiness of Counsel relative to frequent Communion.

WE have already examined that kind of purity of heart, which we are commanded to possess before we can venture to communicate without profanation ; we now come to that holiness of counsel, or of that perfection and sanctity of manners, which, though not of positive precept, is ever earnestly inculcated to all who aspire to frequent communion ; the discussion of which, will throw a satisfactory light on the whole subject we have in hand. That we may proceed on safe and sure ground, the council of Trent shall direct our steps, and lay open to us, in the clearest point of view, the real meaning of Jesus Christ and of his church

concerning the disposition which becomes frequent communion. The oracle is as follows : “ That all and every
“ one of the faithful, from a remem-
“ brance of the infinite grandeur, and
“ of the extreme love of Jesus Christ
“ who gives us his flesh to eat, may be-
“ lieve and reverence these holy mys-
“ teries with such DEVOTION, that
“ they may FREQUENTLY receive this
“ bread which is above all substance.”

From hence it obviously appears, that the devotion which is here spoken of, is the result of a lively faith concerning the grandeur and infinite love of our Redeemer, and that this faith should powerfully induce us to frequent communion.

Now the character and the essential constituent of devotion in general, is, in the opinion of St. Francis of Sales, an ardent affection of the soul, which

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bends her to a ready compliance with the will of God, and is styled the flame of charity. In our present disquisition, devotion is a fervorous inclination of a righteous soul towards the blessed Eucharist, which renders her serious and steady in a desire of, in a preparation for, and in an assiduity in frequent communion.

It is an affection of the soul, and not of the imagination or of the senses: it is therefore no ways incompatible with a crowd of distractions and temptations, nor yet with an involuntary tepidity, reluctance and disgust; and as the point of perfection to which it may extend is undetermined and boundless, the degrees of this perfection are consequently numberless. Some Christians attain many degrees of it, and others but few; communion, however, is fruitful and beneficial in proportion

as this affection of the soul is active and fervorous: There is an habitual and an actual devotion.

The habitual, is that which nourishes a warm desire of frequent communion, as being our sovereign good, our only treasure, the best remedy for every evil, and the best means to live in Jesus Christ. This pious inclination produces daily greater purity of heart, from the habitual desire of becoming more worthy of the possession of a God, and includes a fixed resolution of frequently partaking of this heavenly banquet, not vaguely and in general, but determinately at regular and stated times, so as to leave no room for chance, custom, humour, or caprice. An indetermined desire of communicating often, as it does not deserve the appellation of a real desire, will also be productive of no great

advantage. But the Christian who resolves to communicate on stated days in the month, or week, will reap infinite benefit from his holy resolution, because it will gradually bring on great purity of conscience, and, with irresistible strength, will arm him against his enemies.

It is clear that this habitual desire of being united to Jesus Christ, will readily engage us in a faithful obedience to whatever he and his Church demands of us, and therefore daily communion will be the object of our warmest wishes: for, as our faults and imperfections are daily, what can be more obvious than to wish for, and to apply a daily remedy?

Should this assertion seem too general, or impracticable to some Christians, a retrospect on the golden age of Christianity, will solve the diffi-

culty. A larger share of faith, a greater regularity in conduct and manners, would wonderfully multiply communions amongst us, and bring Christendom back to that flourishing state, which was first established by Apostolic labour. We serve the same God, and profess the same faith, why should not our conduct clash with their example ?

Every motive induces me to avoid singularity in opinion, especially in religious matters : I therefore shall advance nothing of my own, when I come to determine how frequently Christians, in general ought to communicate : the following are the most common rules which the Saints and Doctors of the Church have handed down to us ; the inspection of them will diffuse a light over this important subject, the rays of which, many

Christians stand greatly in need of, to discover the impropriety of the custom they have taken up, of going to the Sacrament but at indulgence-times.

To be really serious in the business of salvation, monthly communion, in the estimation of S. Charles Boromeus, not only is expedient but even necessary: this monthly duty, our saint chiefly extends to those whose way of life is the most exposed to ignorance and dissipation, such as peasants, hard working people and soldiers; he is not however for excluding any of these denominations, from a more frequent participation of the holy mysteries, where the prevailing ignorance and dissipation of their state, can by any means be removed, and when their own inclination leads them to greater piety. But communion once a fort-

night, is yet more advisable, because it better secures the only important affair. No practice whatever can so well shield us from sin, and from the many occasions which lead to it: and those who would advance in virtue and perfection, those who value a lasting repentance, and wish to keep up their fervor in the service of God, should communicate on every Sunday and holiday.

There are many who receive great favours from above, many who have great and interesting duties to discharge, many lead a regular and exemplary life, and are in earnest in the desire of salvation; all such will not exceed proper bounds, if they communicate four or five times a week and even daily, especially within the Octaves of Easter, Whitsuntide, Christmas, Corpus Christi, and of the festi-

vals of the Blessed Virgin : a devotion like this, will best impress on our minds a proper sense of those great mysteries, and will best benefit us unto life everlasting.

S. Charles exhorts us to communion before we go upon a journey, or undertake an affair of consequence : when we have been successful in our undertakings, when we recover from sickness or escape from danger : he advises the same practice, as often as God is pleased to visit us with affliction and adversity : when a parent, child, or friend is taken from us ; when we wish for the conversion of any of our friends : on the anniversary-day of our baptism ; on the feast of the saint whose name we bear, &c.

The same saint, de Sales and Maldonatus, are for frequent communion among young people, particularly a-

mong students, and cardinal Toletus determines that, when weekly, it generally is the most expedient and salutary. The opinion of S. Thomas is, that when youth are come to be susceptible of devotion, they are to be admitted to the sacred table. What favorable judgment therefore can be formed of such parents and pastors, as keep from communion those intrusted to their care, till they have got up to the age of sixteen or seventeen, and perhaps twenty years? Are they first to forfeit their baptismal innocence, and become almost incorrigible, before they are to partake of this heavenly food? Frequent communion is the best preservative against vice, the best support to virtue, and is more necessary to a Christian at that critical and slippery period of life, than at any other. The same saints and doctors, the rituals of

many dioceses, and several provincial councils advise also frequent communion in time of sickness, especially to those who, when in health, were used to that holy custom.

Actual devotion, which is much recommended to frequent communicants, is an ardour of soul which rouses and collects together the powers of mind and heart, for the better reception of so great a guest: before communion it excites lively sentiments of confidence, love, and such like virtues, and after communion, it produces similar sentiments of amorous thanksgivings, and engages the soul to relish the sweetness of the presence of her spouse, and quietly to listen to his interior voice.

And here I wish to observe, that the anxiety and solicitude which some carry with them to communion, is greatly

hurtful to actual devotion: the God whom we receive, is a God of peace and tranquillity, and it is his delight, to dwell in a peaceable heart. He indeed is the source of this peace, and he brings it with him: our exterior and interior should savour of nothing but of joy and of confidence. He speaks to us, as he did to his apostles, "Fear not, peace be with you, it is I, who am your God and your Saviour."

All fear and anxiety which intervene at communion, are occasioned by the malice of our ghostly enemy, who at that time, more than at any other, labours to distress and annoy us. He suggests to some, the magnitude of their former transgressions, the uncertainty of their being forgiven, and consequently the danger of a sacrilege: to others he magnifies their daily failings,

and tempts them to an endless discovery of hidden commissions, by which wile, several are piteously deluded, and scrupulously tormented. Whereas a rational and prudent discussion and examination of our interior on the one hand, joined to a due sorrow and purpose of amendment on the other, should be motive enough to compose us in peace, especially when we reflect that it is no tyrant, but a most indulgent father we give the meeting to. For all such perplexities however, no remedy is so efficacious, as proper obedience to a prudent director.

While some tire and fatigue themselves in endeavours to bring on a more sensible devotion, there are others who are pained by fruitless attempts, to remove involuntary distractions, which naturally redouble from the very solicitude they engage in. No good can

ever arise from an agitated mind : calmness alone can prove beneficial. When you feel a want of devotion, when you find that you wander involuntarily from your purpose, bring gently to mind the motives which should make you fervorous, and calmly bring back your thoughts to the object on which you wish to fix them. That nicety and precision of comportment which some, on this occasion are restless in aiming at, are more the effects of a lurking pride, than of true devotion : their chief endeavour is to be satisfied with themselves, without paying much attention to the easy terms on which God is satisfied with them ; whilst their intention is upright and pure, they need no better preparation ; to look for angelical perfection, in a mind weighed down by a mass of corruption, would be either folly or presumption. When

we communicate, our whole attention should be given to our mighty and loving guest, to whom we should penitently, yet confidently acknowledge that we are truly objects of compassion, and therefore, the best entitled to mercy.

At that important moment, we should, like Magdalen, sit silent at his feet, and allow him leisure to take possession of, and to speak to our hearts.

The husband-man in quiet expectation, abandons to the benign influence of the sun, the soil he has duly cultivated; and in proper season, his wishes are crowned with a plentiful harvest. Jesus Christ, the sun of justice, would, in like manner, illuminate and warm us with his love, would sow, and bring forth in us the practice of every virtue, did not a certain activity and hastiness on our part, retard his

divine influence : our constant prayer should be, "Speak, O Lord, for thy
" servant heareth."

Neither is the same degree of devotion expected from every one. Our God, who is goodness itself, is sufficiently pleased with that degree which is best suited to our present strength ; and even, though not quite free from some venal faults, or from an involuntary coldness and indifference, if we seek him from our heart, he will make us welcome.

In this manner did king Ezechiah insist on the celebration of the paschal lamb, although a great part of the people had not been purified according to the rigor of the legal rites. He prayed to God in their behalf, and said :
" Lord, thou art all-bounteous, and
" therefore, thou wilt pardon those
" who come to thee with their whole

“ heart ; thou wilt not impute to
“ them as a sin, should they be less
“ prepared than they ought to be.”

* The Lord heard his prayer, and was propitious to his people.

Many are the methods which are pointed out to attain actual devotion : there are books without number on this subject, and every one should follow that method, which is best suited to his taste. For my part, I am of opinion, that, as our Lord chiefly instituted this sacrament to impress on our minds and hearts the memory of his mysteries and of his excessive love for man, most tender and inflamed would our devotion be, did we regularly reflect on those mysteries, as the church successively celebrates them in the course of the year. In Advent, for instance, we might consider and say, I am going to receive Jesus Christ

my Lord and God, who, for my sake, became an infant, and was adored by the sheperds, the sages and the angels. In Lent : I am going to receive Jesus Christ my Saviour, who sinks under the weight of my sins, who agonizes and sweats blood, who is scourged, buffeted, crowned with thorns, and finally expires on a cross to give me life. At Easter : I am going to receive Jesus Christ my God, who being resuscitated, heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, awakens the dead, forgives sins, and instructs the apostles. By these, and such like considerations, the thought of our Lord would press strongly on our mind, and sink deeply in our heart, which would constantly keep up in our breast the flame of charity.

There are some, who, from a mistaken notion of decency and reverence,

are reluctant to communicate two days together: this difficulty is vain and groundless. Our Redeemer, who most ardently desires to reign absolute over our hearts, not only for a day, but every moment of our life, cannot object to our love and confidence: neither can we suppose that the Christian, who is more holy from the grace he receives in this day's communion, can be less worthy of communion to-morrow. The third day has the advantage over the second, and the fourth over the third, from the efficacy and virtue of the sacrament, which imparts to the soul worth and merit, proportionably as it is often and daily received. He, who, by means of the best acts of devotion, prepares himself for one communion, has doubtless an immediate right to another: now the grace which flows from the first, is su-

perior in excellency to any other preparation, and consequently paves the way for a second. We would allow of repeated and continued communions to one, whom we believed endowed with the gift of prophecy and of miracles: the advantage however of one communion is infinitely preferable to all such exterior gifts, which, in themselves, are no way connected with interior merit and virtue.

CHAPTER XVIII.

n the strict Obligation of Frequent Com-
munion.

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or Sunday ^{persons} THERE are ~~some~~, so very ignorant within of their Christian duties, that though ^{obtain} they admit of the propriety of, and ^{Corpus Christi.} acquiesce to) the advantages (arising

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Text. — He sent his servant, at the hour of supper, to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse.

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~~from~~ frequent communion, they no further consider communion in general, as incumbent upon them, than it is yearly enjoined by an ecclesiastical law.

Whereas they ought to know that frequent communion is as essential a duty, and as formal a command of our Lord and Master, as any proclaimed to us by holy writ. The words, *take ye and eat, do this in remembrance of me*, have invariably been understood and taught by the church, as an express command, both of sacrifice and sacrament, incumbent on clergy and laity : for so we are informed by the council of Trent *. “ Our Saviour, says “ the said council, has instituted this “ sacrament, and has ORDERED that “ by nourishing ourselves with it, we

* Dominus Deus . . . ut offerrent PRÆCE-
PIT : ut etiam ecclesia catholica semper intellex
et docuit. Trid. Sess. 22. c. 1.

“ should honor his memory, and announce his death till he comes to judge the world.”*

When he says, *take ye and eat, do this in remembrance of me*, he at once commands the oblation, the consecration, the communion of the priest, and the distribution of the Eucharist to the faithful. For he commands his apostles and their successors to do in future what he then did; he then distributed the Eucharist, they therefore must do the same to the end of the world. This precept is still more clearly specified, where we read, “ Verily, verily I say unto you, unless you eat of the flesh of the son man, you shall not have life in you.”

* Salvator noster sacramentum hoc instituit, et in illius sumptione colere nos sui memoriam PRÆCEPIT, et annunciare mortem donec ipse ad judicandum mundum veniat. Sess. 13, c. 2.

It is allowed, that, certain as it may be, that there is such a precept, It is no where determined what number of communions in the ~~month~~ or year we are strictly obliged to : but if we reflect on the motive for which this law was given, and on the purpose for which the blessed Eucharist was instituted, we readily shall discover our determinate obligation : this gracious purpose, says the council of Trent, is spiritually to feed our souls, to free us from venial commissions, and to guard us against greater excesses : as often therefore as communion is necessary to preserve us in grace, and to shield us from grievous transgressions, so often is communion strictly binding and of divine precept. This is the unanimous opinion of the fathers, doctors, and councils.

Communion then is commanded as a help, morally necessary to save ourselves, as a help, the best calculated for that purpose, nay, and to several, as the only means of salvation. Prayer, fasting, bodily austerities, alms-deeds, and solitude; are, indeed, powerful means to secure eternal life; but labour or bad health, incapacitate several from mortification and fasting; a multiplicity of affairs and avocations, preclude assiduity in prayer; many are unable to shew their charity; retirement is incompatible with a family and business: but frequent communion is within every one's reach; it will powerfully protect us from danger, and preserves us in life and in health. Without this help, many among the faithful will labour in vain to subdue their passions, and to conquer their ghostly enemies. If in the many conflicts

they are engaged in, they wish to come off victorious, they will find it necessary that God should frequently reign in their heart. Very sinful therefore must their neglect be, as often as they omit to avail themselves of a remedy, at once so ready and powerful against every evil. In this sense, S. Francis of Sales writes, “* That those unfortunate Christians, who perish in eternity, will be destitute of every plea, when they will stand before their Judge, who will convince them that they wantonly ran on to death, whilst, by means of this heavenly support, they might have preserved their life : foolish people, he will say, why did you die, at the time you had at command this life-giving food?”

Devout Life, 2. p. c. 20.

So necessary is frequent communion to continue in grace, that experience has shewn, that many who have omitted this duty longer than they were prudently advised to abstain from it, have fallen into sin immediately on their neglect ; for though we are promised help to avoid every snare, it is only upon condition that we slight not the means, we have at hand, of coming off victorious. S. Augustin must have considered frequent communion in this light, when he styled it a christian duty. He remarkbly elucidates the point in question. “ To
“ you, who have been newly chris-
“ -tened, I had promised to give you
“ a discourse on the sacrament of the
“ Lord’s table, which you now be-
“ hold, and of which yesterday you
“ partook : it is incumbent on you to
“ know what it is that you have re-

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“ ceived, what you are to continue to
“ receive, and what you are in duty
“ bound to receive DAILY: that bread
“ which you see on the altar, being
“ consecrated by the word of God, is
“ the body of Christ.”*

To the above testimony, I could add many more of the ablest divines, but ~~not to be prolix,~~ I confine myself to that of the learned and greatly admired Tourneli, who asserts, “ That all the
“ faithful are bound by divine precept,
“ to preserve the life of their soul, for
“ which happy preservation this sacrament was instituted by our Lord . . .

* Promiseram vobis, qui baptizati estis sermonem, quo exponerem mensæ Dominicæ sacramentum, quod modo etiam videtis, cujus nocte præteritâ participes facti estis; debetis scire quid accepistis, quid accepturi estis, quid QUOTIDIE accipere debeatis. Panis ille, quem videtis in altari, sanctificatus per verbum Dei, corpus est Christi. Aug. serm. 227. ad recens baptiz.

“ I maintain, that the faithful are
“ strictly obliged **FREQUENTLY** to re-
“ ceive the Eucharist.”*

The ecclesiastical law, concerning communion, obliges but once in a twelve-month; but besides this law, there exists another, which is from Christ, ^{himself} and imports frequent communion: this the Church can neither alter or restrain. And, indeed, it has always been the remotest from her views to attempt either: on the contrary, in every age, she has constantly taught, and, as much as possible, has strongly enforced, both to clergy and laity, frequent ~~and even~~ daily communion.

* Tenentur omnes fideles jure divino studere conservationi vitæ spiritualis, & hoc sacramentum institutum est a Christo ad conservationem hujus vitæ. *Et infra.* Responde, debere fideles **FREQUENTER** ad sacram Eucharistiam accedere. L. de Sacram. Euch. art. 3.

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In the first ages, she excluded from the benefit of her prayers and sacrifices, those who did not communicate daily : in process of time, she restrained her censures to a weekly neglect ; in later periods, as fervor decreased with the increase of her members, she limited her punishments to three times in the year, Chrstmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. Finally she has judged it prudent to confine excommunication to the neglect of Easter only. He therefore, who at present, only communicates at Easter, evades, it is true, ecclesiastical censure ; but does not, by that communion, fulfil the divine law, which enjoins frequent communion. For, besides the penal law which is annexed to a neglect of Easter-duty, there is a directive precept of more frequent communion, which is virtually contained in the ~~ampliative~~ expres-

sion, *at least* : the real meaning of which is, you shall communicate at Easter, and at other times, as often as it shall be necessary to enable you to avoid sin, and persevere in grace : if at Easter you are deficient in that duty, you shall incur ecclesiastical censure : and as to those other communions which you stand in need of for salvation, and which you abstain from, the Church leaves them to God's just judgment.

We have observed, that neither the divine, nor the ecclesiastical precept, determinately point out any number of communions throughout the year. Which specified number is wisely omitted, because it would not be practicable, nor yet expedient that all should be guided by the same rule. The various dispositions, characters, exigencies, and conditions induce relative obligations on some, to which others, in dissimilar

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circumstances, may not be immediately subject to. We have all, however, an invariable and certain rule to conduct ourselves by, in the following words, *He who eats of my flesh shall never die.* We are therefore to regulate our communions according to our wants; if these be many and great, those should be proportionably frequent; for as grace is constantly to be preserved, and sin at all times to be avoided, so at all times are proper means to be used, to preserve the one, and to avoid the other.

A neglect of frequent communion, is not only a violation of the law of Jesus Christ, but also a considerable breach of well-regulated charity, which obliges every one, to consult, after the best manner he can, one's real interest and happiness, for which purpose, frequent communion is the very best of

means. Greatly therefore inimical must he be to himself, and strangely inattentive to his greatest concerns, who by so gross a neglect, exposes himself to the danger of forfeiting the favor of God. The man who, in the midst of plenty, should die through hunger, from an obstinate refusal of nourishment, would be guilty of suicide: a refusal of this heavenly support is proportionably the more criminal, as the life of the soul is superior to a temporal existence.

This same neglect is a criminal contempt of the law of Christ, who not only invites to, but also commands frequent communion. For if we penetrate into the hearts of those who rarely communicate, the real reason will be found to be, that they prefer the creature to the Creator, and an indulgence of their passions, to christian sobriety

and self denial. Ingratitude also is joined to contempt: the God whom we adore in the Eucharist ardently wishes to live within us, and habitually to reign over us, with all the charms of his bounty, and all the treasures of his divinity; to compass this great end, he overthrows, by a crowd of prodigies, the established laws of nature. The revelations, visions and raptures with which he has at times gifted many of his faithful servants, are not comparable to the value and advantage of one communion: this inestimable blessing is daily at our option; but alas! how few avail themselves of their invaluable privilege! most make little or no account of the bliss which the angels could wish to taste. Jesus Christ resides in our tabernacles, (*in mundo erat,*) whilst we affect not to know him: *et mundus eum non cogno-*

vit : he claims a dominion over our hearts, as his own property : (*in propria venit*), and we, his inheritance and his children, refuse him admittance into our breasts, *et sui eum non receperunt*. What is injustice, what is ingratitude, if this be not the greatest ?

But what, in one sense, is still more deplorable, a neglect of this kind is no ambiguous sign of final reprobation : “ It is much to be feared,” says S. Cyprian, “ lest he who is long separated “ from the body of Jesus Christ, “ should also be very remote from “ eternal salvation*.” And we read in the council of Agatha, that, “ Those “ among the laity who do not com- “ municate at Christmas, Easter and “ Whitsuntide, are not to be deemed

Serm. de Cen. Dom.

2 K 3

" Catholics*." As the happiness of " the saints in heaven consists in the possession of Jesus Christ, so the misery the reprobate are plunged in, consists in their eternal separation from him. Those who refused to possess him in time, are not likely to enjoy him in eternity: and while they ^{kept away} ~~flew~~ from him in his sacrament, they have little reason to hope that he will be their everlasting reward. Besides, what is generally the consequence of such a neglect? A train of irregularities and vices, which too readily lead to certain perdition.

But, may it not be deemed a presumption to communicate often, as those who do so, must entertain no

* Sæculares, qui in natali Domini Pascha, Pentecoste non communicaverint, Catholici non credantur, nec inter catholicos habeantur. Con. Agath. c. sæculares. ce consec. dist. 2.

bad opinion of their own worth and merit? I answer, that there is no presumption in thinking one's self worthy of communion, that is, in thinking one's self in the state of grace, and in one's believing that he may often receive worthily. It is an incumbent duty on every Christian to be habitually averse to, and exempt from sin. And S. Augustin expressly says, "† That every one of the faithful, when in the state of grace, may say, I AM HOLY : when you acknowledge your own insufficiency, and proclaim the gift, you are not arrogant but grateful." It is not humility, but absurdity to fancy ourselves in the state of sin, if we have either lived regularly, or done

† Dicat unusquisque fidelium, SANCTUS sum : non est ista superbia elati, sed confessio non ingrati. Habere te agnosce et ex te nihil habere, ut nes cuperbus sis, nec ingratus. Aug. Psal. lxxxv.

penance for past offences. Religion and true piety are perfectly conformable to, and no ways inconsistent with common sense and reason.

But what seems to me to be the height of presumption is, to refrain from, to oppose, or disapprove of frequent communion, notwithstanding that it is enforced and commanded by the oracles of Jesus Christ, the decisions of his church, and the practice of the saints in every age; thus, I say, to prefer one's private judgment to that of the author of our holy religion, to stand up, and make head against all antiquity, and the supreme tribunal of Christ's church, is an intollerable obstinacy and a consummate arrogance. Some blame the conduct of such directors as enjoin frequent communion, by way of satisfaction in the tribunal of penance: the censure however is

improper, and can only be passed by those, who either are unwilling seriously to enter on a reform of life, or are avowed enemies to frequent communion. No injunction can be more interesting and salutary than this, as it is at once the most efficacious, and the most expeditious means both of conversion, and perfection. He who is happy enough to meet with a guide, who leads him through this path, will soon be properly formed to the school of Christ, and presently will learn to triumph over himself, the world and the powers of darkness. This practice was familiar to the most zealous followers of the apostles, such as the Saints Vincent Ferreri, Charles Borromeus, Francis Xavier, Francis of Sales : and the holy priest Eude, whose repute was great in the conversion of souls in his excellent book on a good

director, recommends frequent communion as the best sacramental injunction.

CHAPTER XIX

Frequent Communion is a fundamental Point of the Christian Religion.

HAVING proved that frequent communion is not barely an arbitrary devotion, but an incumbent duty on every Christian, my present endeavour is to shew the importance of it, and how essential a connection it bears with revealed religion. As in other assertions, so also in this, the authority of the fathers, doctors, and councils, shall support and lead me on.

In the opinion of S. Thomas, the Eucharist is the sacrament of sacra-

ments, the ultimate end for which they were instituted, it is the consummation of grace and of a spiritual life, and the helps and graces which flow from the other sacraments are only suitable preparations for a worthy reception of this; a neglect, therefore, of this sacrament, is evidently a neglect of the fundamental part of religion: for which reason, S. Chrysostom remarks, as we have seen elsewhere,*
“ That rare and unfrequent communion is what breeds every disturbance
“ in the church of God.”

The council of Reims says, “ As
“ the Christian religion does not contain any thing more valuable and
“ more excellent than the sacrament
“ of the Eucharist, nor yet any thing
“ which is more conducive to a holy

* Hom. in Ep. ad Tim.

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“ life, than a MOST FREQUENT par-
 “ ticipation of the holy sacrament,
 “ we greatly grieve that many among
 “ the Christians of our days, should
 “ be so neglectful as to receive it but
 “ once a year let pastors there-
 “ fore use every endeavour to persuade
 “ the faithful, that there are no better
 “ or more compendious means, than
 “ most frequent communion, to ex-
 “ tinguish heresies, and restore the
 “ church to her apostolical splendor*.”
 From hence it appears, that the coun-

* Cum nil habeat Christiana religio sacramento
 Eucharistiæ præstantius, nilque ad sanctè vivendum
 efficacius ejusdem sacramenti frequentissima partici-
 patione, dolemus tantam esse Christianorum hujusce
 temporis incuriam, ut semel tantum in anno sumant : . .
 quare persuadere nitantur nullum esse modum aptiorem
 et compendiosiore quo sopitis et extinctis hæresibus
 ecclesiæ apostolicæ facies redeat. Concil. Rem.
 Act. 1.

cil ascribes to unfrequent communion the rise and progress of all heresy, and to the contrary practice, a fair image of primitive lustre.

“ Were you to deprive the church,” says the learned Abbot Rupertus, “ of the daily sacrifice, which brings to our mind the funeral of our Lord, you would soon see with what propriety he might say, *what benefit arises from my blood?* For then the remembrance of him, which, by means of this daily offering, now warms every breast, would presently be obliterated; charity would decay; faith would languish, hope would lose footing, and the loud cry of the blood of the righteous Abel, would no longer be heard, which cry is DAILY renewed in this great sacrifice, and daily opens

“ the mouth of the church, to take
 “ in so precious a draught*.”

Suppress frequent communion, and you equivalently suppress the three theological virtues : doubts even concerning the real presence would ensue ; vice and immortality would erect their standard, and assert their empire over the Christian world. The histories of latter times demonstrate the truth of my assertion.

What several nations and kingdoms have still reason to deplore, from a

* *Aufer a cœtu ecclesiæ quotidianas salvatoris nostri exequias, et vide quam merito dicat ipse salvator, quæ utilitas in sanguine meo? Refrigescente enim ea, quo hoc modo nunc ubique calet ejus memoria, refrigescet universa charitas, muta erit fides, claudicabit spes, conticescet magnus ille clamor sanguinis justi Abel, qui per traditum tanti sacrificiî ritum, quotidie reparat vocem, quotidie laxat os bibentis et vociferantis terræ, scilicet ecclesiæ. Rupertus de Offic. Div. l. 2. c. 10.*

neglect of this life-giving food, is daily visible in particulars, who follow their unhappy example. For want of this nourishment, they relent in the practice of virtue, their religion becomes a burden, their languid faith holds but a thread to the fold of Christ: nay, if in the long run they become not avowed apostates before men, they often are really so, in the sight of God.

On the contrary, by frequent communion, our faith, hope and charity quicken, and grow perfect; and as far as in us lies, we contribute to our Saviour's dominion throughout the world, according to the canticle of the church: "Let us adore Christ our king, who by giving himself for their food, extends his empire over all nations*."

Invit. Off. Fest. Cor. Christ.

2 L 2

There can be no doubt but we are infinitely honored, as often as our Lord vouchsafes to admit us to his sacred table ; but we also, on our part, honor and glorify him by communion, in a manner the most exalted and the most worthy of a God ; it is an act of supreme worship, and of the most transcendant pitch of adoration which man can pay him : for it is nothing less than a God whom we offer to God, a God who jointly with us, and in us, adores and glorifies the supreme Being. It was no doubt for this reason, that Ignatius the martyr, stiled the Eucharist the glory of our Lord ; and* therefore was so pressing, that all should FREQUENTLY partake of it.

The Christian who often complies with this duty, gives the strongest

* Festinate ergo FREQUENTER accedere ad Eucharistiam, id est, ad gloriam Domini. Ep. 14.

proof of his belief in the words of his Master, and of his confidence in his infallible promises : and this steadiness of faith and of hope, reflects the highest degree of honor that man can return to the Deity. To believe that bread is changed into the body, and wine into the blood of Christ, that the same body is in many places at once, in heaven, in the Eucharist, and in millions of places upon earth ; that the whole body of a perfect man is in the smallest particle that can be discerned, and all this in opposition to the relation of our senses, in opposition also to the efforts of Satan, the impetuosity of our passions, the force of bad example and of heterodox principles, is glorious to Christ who has revealed these truths, because he is firmly believed to be incapable of either deceiving or of being deceived.

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In the Eucharist, the miracles which our Saviour wrought during his mortal life are continually renewed. The dead then were brought to life, the blind saw, the sick were healed : here millions receive the life of their soul, the light of eternal truths guides their steps, all infirmities and diseases are removed, the devils of impurity, pride, sloth, envy, discord and dissension are put to flight : and the opposite virtues by frequent communion, take root, and flourish in the Christian world.

Frequent communion is also a solemn renewal of our holy religion. To know Jesus Christ, his grandeur and mysteries is eternal life. The Eucharist is a lively exhibition of these mysteries, such as his incarnation, nativity, his death, resurrection and miracles. The Christian who communicates on these festivals, renews those proper senti-

ments of virtue, which each of these great truths respectively must excite: he habitually lives in Christ, and Christ lives in him: and thus, by a sacramental union, anticipates the eternal fruition, which he has every motive to hope for.

Lastly, frequent communion is a strong proof of our holy religion, because it is a palpable accomplishment of several prophecies which foretold and asserted it. According to the royal prophet, "There is to be a numerous church, composed of all nations, formed by the true Messiah, and they shall be styled the people of God †. The poor and the rich

† Narrabo nomen tuum fratribus meis, in medio ecclesiæ laudabo te . . . edent pauperes et saturabuntur . . . et adorabunt in conspectu ejus universæ familiæ gentium. Quoniam Domini est regnum, et ipse dominabitur gentium: manduca-

“ shall eat what they adore, and adore
 “ what they eat, by which they shall
 “ be satiated.” And elsewhere, “ the
 “ Lord in his great mercy and good-
 “ ness, has renewed in a compendious
 “ manner, the remembrance of all his
 “ wonders, by giving food to those
 “ who fear him*.” This compendium of prodigies, is no other than the Eucharist, and those truly fear the Lord, who frequently receive it.

The prophet, I say†, rapt into future time, beholds it pregnant with the Christian church, founded on the top of a mountain, “ On which the Lord
 “ will prepare for all the nations of
 “ the earth a most delicious banquet,
 “ where they shall drink a most ex-
 “ quisite wine, and death shall be

verunt et adoraverunt omnes pingues terræ . . .
 annuntiabunt celi justitiam ejus : populo qui nascetur quem fecit Dominus. Psal. xxi.

* Psal. cx.

† Isaias xxv.

“ thrown head-long into the abyss.”
The Eucharist is this continual feast which characterises the Christian religion, and precipitates into the abyss immorality and sin, which alone can give death to the soul.

The prophet Malachiah, speaking in the name of the Lord, reproaches the priests of the old law, with a neglect of proper worship, and threatens them with his vengeance : “ * Unworthy ministers, from hence forward I reject your offerings ; your sacrifices shall cease, and your mode of worship shall be abolished : I behold a religion extended from east to west, which alone shall glorify the grandeur of my name : yes, from every corner of the globe, there is offered to me an unspotted victim,

* Malach. i.

“ which completes my glory among
“ all nations.”

This pure and spotless oblation, which, at once, abolishes and supplies the places of all other sacrifices, which is become the only pleasing victim to the Most High, and which alone is to continue to honor him as he deserves to be honoured, is the adorable body and blood of Jesus Christ, who throughout the world, is daily immolated and eaten by numberless priests and fervent Christians, not only spiritually, but also by a real participation of the Eucharist, and therefore S. Chrysostom invites us to observe, “* How wonderfully and clearly the prophet explains the mysterious table of Christians, at which the unbloody victim is eaten.”

* S. Chrys. hom. in Psalm xcr.

Daniel * foretels that antichrist, to efface the memory of our Lord, and deprive mankind of the benefit of frequent communion, will abolish the sacrifice of the mass till then uninterrupted : as therefore the cessation of frequent communion is the proof of the existence of antichrist, the practice of it must necessarily prove the reign of Jesus Christ, and of the truth of his religion.

S. Paul commands a constant communion and offering, until the second coming of our Lord, that we may continually announce the mystery of the death of a God, and may continually receive benefit from the mystery of our redemption ; this precept is complied with by those priests who daily offer this unspotted Lamb, and by those

* Dan. viii. v. 11, 12. c. xii. v. 11.

among the faithful, who ~~daily, or~~ frequently communicate.

Our blessed Redeemer, on two different occasions, compares the kingdom of heaven, that is, his Church, to a great feast, to which all mankind are invited. It is truly a great feast, because the meat and drink put before us, are his own flesh and blood. He who shall eat of this heavenly food, shall not die, but shall enjoy life everlasting; and he who refuses to partake of it, shall die the death of sin, and shall be excluded from eternal life. He even expresses a desire of compulsion, *compelle intrare*, that no one may be destitute, and lost for want of this powerful help.

Such then are the oracles which, above three thousand years ago, spoke of the empire of a God over a people collected from all parts of the globe,

who should honor and glorify his holy name by the unparalleled prodigy of the eucharistic sacrament. Nor is the accomplishment of them less marvellous than the prediction. The Messiah makes his appearance in the world, he forms the people he is to reign over, and commissions his disciples to disseminate his doctrine throughout the universe. They obey, and their obedience is successful : for near two thousand years past the nation of Christians, made up of all nations, has glorified God by the unbloody sacrifice of a God-man, which at once pays due honor to the Deity, and sanctifies man. In the days of the apostles, communion was daily. From their days to ours, the bishops, and their respective churches, the doctors and their schools, the founders of religious orders, and their respective followers,

the saints, in company with their disciples, the pastors at the head of their flocks, particular as well as general councils, the sovereign pontiffs, at the head of the universal Church, have unanimously persevered in the same doctrine, and invariably have continued to invite the faithful to a most frequent participation of this incomparable feast. Such is the glorious spectacle, which every age, from the apostles, exhibits to our view : what motives can be adduced, what reasons be alleged, why this holy practice should be superseded by the age we live in ? A deviation from a point of doctrine, so essentially interwoven with the religion of Christ, as frequent communion has been proved to be, must evidently be erroneous and antichristian.

F I N I S.

DISCOURSE

On the Love of God.

CHAPTER I.

*Of the Conformity and Union with God,
by the means of a perfect love ; and
the practice we are to observe in this
exercise.*

THAT we may better understand what perfection is included in this exercise of conformity to the will of God, and that we may clearly shew how far we may advance by this means ; I intend to conclude this treatise, by speaking briefly of the exercise acknowledged by the saints and masters of a spiritual life, to be the most sublime of all.— This exercise is that of the love of God ;

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and without doubt it is not foreign to our purpose to speak of it in this place, since one of the principal effects of love being, according to St. Denis, to endeavour that those who love have but one will in all things ; it follows by consequence, the more we love God the more we conform ourselves to his divine will ; and again, the more strict this conformity is, the more perfect is also our love. The better to explain this point, it is requisite we elevate ourselves in thought up to heaven, and there behold, that the continual occupation of the blessed is to love God, to conform themselves entirely to his holy will, and to have no other will but his ; inasmuch as the nearer we approach this idea, the greater will our perfection be in this exercise. St. John in his first canonical epistle, says, that the sight of God makes the blessed

like to him : *When he shall appear to us in glory, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is.** And this, because at the same instant they see God, they are so transformed into him, that their will becomes one and the same thing with his. Let us then see what is his will, and what he most of all loves, that so by knowing what is the will, and the love of the blessed in heaven, we may also know at the same time what will and love we ought to have in ourselves. The will and supreme love in God is the will of his own glory, and the love of his own being sovereignly perfect, and sovereignly amiable. The will and love of the blessed is the same thing with the will and love of God ; so that their love is a continual act, by which they are moved incessantly, to will with all their

* 1 John, 3. 2.

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force, that God may be what he is ; that he be equally good, equally perfect, equally happy, equally worthy of honour and praise, as he in himself is : And as they see in him, all they can wish may be, they thence feel an inconceivable joy, on seeing that he whom they love, is so complete in perfection, and so replenished with all good. What we see sometimes happen in this life, may give us some faint idea or representation of that supreme and all divine joy which the blessed receive herein. Consider how sensible the joy of a son is, who loving his father with all affection and tenderness, sees him rich, wise, powerful, honoured, and esteemed by the whole world, and particularly favoured by his prince. There are children, doubtless, so nobly born as not to feel any joy comparable to that of seeing their parents so highly esteem-

ed, and in so sublime a post and degree of dignity. If then in the world, where the sentiments of love are so weak, and where all happiness is so contemptible, this joy, notwithstanding, arrives to such a greatness ; what must that of the blessed be in beholding their sovereign master, their Creator and their heavenly Father, into whom they are wholly transformed by love, to be infinitely good, infinitely holy, infinitely perfect, and infinitely powerful ; in beholding all things created to receive their being and perfection from his holy will only ; and that not so much as one leaf falls from the tree without his permission ? It is of this joy the Apostle speaks when he says, *neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man been able to conceive what God has designed for those who love him.** This is that river of living wa-

* 1 Cor. 2. 9.

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ter which St. John saw, issuing forth from the throne of God and the Lamb. That river whose impetuous stream rejoiced the city of God :† That river, in which the blessed continually quench their thirst, and inebriate themselves with divine love : blessing God eternally, and singing perpetually, bless God, because the Lord our God omnipotent is entered into his kingdom ; let us rejoice and exult, and give him the glory.‡ They rejoice at the glory and greatness of God. They make themselves happy incessantly, and as it were animating one the other, they all say, blessing, splendour, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and strength be to our God forever. Amen.§*

See here, to speak according to the weak extent of human capacity, what is the continual exercise and love of

* Apoc. 22. 1.

† Ps. 45. 5.

‡ Apoc. 19. 6. 7.

§ Apoc. 7. 12.

the blessed in heaven, and how great the conformity and union to the divine will; and see consequently what we are to endeavour to imitate as far as in our power, in order that this will may be performed on earth as it is in Heaven. When God ordered Moses to make him a tabernacle: *Take notice,* says he, *and make it according to the model and pattern shewn you upon the mountain.* (a) It is thus, that in imitation of what is performed upon this high mountain of glory, we are to exercise ourselves always in loving and willing what the blessed love and will in Heaven; and what God himself loves and wills. That is to say, the grandeur of his glory, and the immensity of his being, sovereignly perfect and sovereignly happy.

But that all may perform with more facility what we here have laid down,

(a) Exod. 25. 40.

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we will shew in short, in what the practice of this exercise consists. When we are in prayer, let us elevate our understanding to the consideration of the infinite being of God, his eternity, his wisdom, his omnipotence, his beauty, his glory, and his happiness ; and at the same time, form acts of our will, by which we may conceive in ourselves a content and joy, that God is what he is ; that he is God, that he has no dependance on any thing but himself, the immensity of his own being, and the infinite good he possesses. For if he stands in need of nothing whatsoever, and all things stand in need of him ; he is therefore all powerful and all replenished with goodness, with sanctity, and glory, and all other perfections which are found in him without number or limit. St. Thomas and other divines say, this is the greatest and

most perfect act of love we can produce, and the most sublime exercise of conformity we are capable of practising. For there is no more excellent love of God, than that which God bears himself; which is the love of his own glory, and of his sovereignly perfect being; nor a will more holy than his. By consequence then, the more the manner wherein we love God, resembles that wherein he loves himself, the more perfect is our love and our union and conformity to the divine will. Moreover, if it be true what philosophy, or rather what nature itself teaches us, that to love is to wish well to the person we love; it follows of necessity the more we wish another well, the more we love him. But the greatest good we can wish God, is, that which he already possesses—the immensity of his being, of his goodness,

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his wisdom, his omnipotence, and his glory. For we may well rejoice when we love any creature, not only in the gifts which it possesses, but also wished it possessed many more ; inasmuch as all creatures want many things. But as to God, we cannot wish him any thing but he possesses. Because his immensity, including all things, and being infinite in himself, it is impossible he should receive more glory, power and goodness than he already has. Wherefore the greatest good we can wish him, and by consequence the greatest and most perfect love we can bear him, is, to rejoice at the infinite good he possesses, and to take a holy delight therein.

The sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, the glorious virgin, all the saints in Heaven, and all the choirs of angels rejoice incessantly on beholding God,

so replenished with all perfection and good; and eternally manifest their joy by continual songs of gladness, and by the eternal praises they give him.—*Blessed are those, O Lord, who live in your habitations. They shall praise you for ever and ever.** Let us endeavour to imitate them, according as the church teaches us, *in joining our voices and hearts with theirs, and saying with an humble and sincere confession; holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, the Heavens and the earth are full of your glory.* Let us exercise ourselves continually, at least as oft as we are able, in praising and glorifying God, in rejoicing with him at the immensity of that great good he possesses; and so we shall become in some manner like to the blessed, and to God himself, and shall hereby have the most sublime love of God,

* Ps. 83. 5.

and the most perfect conformity to his divine will, we are capable of.

CHAPTER II.

How much this Exercise is recommended to us in Holy Scripture.

THE diligence the Holy Scripture uses in frequently recommending to us this exercise, may serve to shew the merit and excellency of it, and afford us at the same time, matter to practise it, and to employ ourselves more therein. The Psalmist expressly invites us, in these words, *rejoice ye just in our Lord, and conceive a joy and gladness ; and be glorified in him, all ye who have an upright heart.* Let the just exult in our Lord.† Place your joy in our Lord, and he will grant you the petitions of your heart.‡* Or rather he will grant you all you can

* Ps. 31. 11. † Ps, 32. 1. ‡ Ps. 36. 4.

desire, and all you stand in need of. For it is a sort of prayer, wherein tho' you demand nothing, he hears and grants whatever your hearts can covet or petition. The Apostle writing to the Philippians, says; *rejoice without intermission in our Lord* :* and imagining it a point worthy of being inculcated more than once, he immediately adds; *I tell you again rejoice.* It was with such holy joy the Blessed Virgin found herself replenished when she said; *my soul is ravished with joy, in God my Saviour.* † And it was with this sort of joy wherewith our Lord Jesus Christ was transported, when his disciples being returned from the mission, upon which he sent them, the Gospel says, *he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost.* ‡ The Royal Prophet affirms, that when he considered the immensity of God's

* Phil. 4. 4.

† Luke 1. 47.

‡ Luke 10. 21.

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glory, and how worthy God is, that all the world should rejoice at the infinite good he possesses, the joy he felt in his soul passed even to his body.

My heart and my flesh, says he in one place, *are transported with joy in the living God.** And in another place tak-

ing more particular notice of the superabundance of joy : *My soul,* says he, *shall rejoice in our Lord, and shall delight itself in my Saviour. All my bones shall say, O Lord, who is like to you ?†*

In like manner the church which is governed and directed by the Holy Ghost, knowing how sublime this love of God is, invites us at the beginning of the canonical hours, to love him in this manner ; using for this end the words of David : *come let us rejoice in our Lord ; let us sing forth hymns to God our Saviour ; let us present ourselves in*

* Ps. 83. 2. † Ps. 34. 9. & 10.

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his sight, by acknowledging the benefits we have received from him, and let us sing canticles of praise. For our God is a great Lord and a great King, above all other Gods. Because the sea is his, and he created it, and the dry land his hands have founded. It is also for this very same reason and with the same intent, that at the end of every psalm, the church adds always this verse; Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. See here what is meant by these words, enter into the joy of your Lord;† which is to participate in this manner of the infinite joy of God, and to rejoice with him at his glory, his power, his wisdom, and all the other attributes he possesses.*

For the better entertaining ourselves

* Ps. 94. 1. † Mat. 25. 21.

2M 3

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in this spiritual joy : and the more to incite us to the love of this exercise, it is very requisite, to apply ourselves to consider, how great the goodness, the beauty, and the glory of God are ; which are in themselves such, that we only want the sight thereof to make us happy. And in case the damned could but have a sight thereof, all their pains would cease at the same moment, and hell would become a paradise. *For eternal life, as Jesus Christ himself affirms, consists in the knowledge of God.** It is this knowledge, and this sight which makes the happiness of the blessed : and which makes it not for a day only or a year, but for all eternity. So that without ever being tired of the sight of God, they feel therein a content and satisfaction, according to the words of St. John in the Apocalypse :

• John 17. 3.

—*And they shall sing as it were a new Song.** It seems that this conveys a sufficient idea of the goodness, beauty, and infinite perfection of God ; and yet notwithstanding, more, and a great deal more may be said upon this subject. God is so beautiful, so perfect, and so full of glory and majesty, that he renders himself happy in contemplating himself ; and that, because he contemplates and loves himself. Let us now consider, whether we have not sufficient reason to place all our joy in one only thing, which causes the eternal happiness of the blessed ; and which also causes that God himself, by reason of the knowledge he has of his own being, and the love he bears himself.

* Apoc, 14. 3.

CHAPTER III.

How we may still enlarge upon this exercise.

WE may extend this exercise still farther by descending from the contemplation of the divine nature, to the consideration of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, and exciting ourselves thereby to produce the same acts of love and joy. We will consider for this effect, the excellency and perfections of this most sacred humanity.—

We may well rejoice that it has been elevated to the honour, of being united to the divine person, and replenished with grace and glory ; that it is the instrument of the divinity, to sanctify and glorify the elect ; and in general to operate all those graces, and distribute all those supernatural gifts, God imarts to men : and in fine, we will conceive an interior delight in all that

concerns the perfection and glory of the soul and body of Jesus Christ. To dwell more hereupon, and to excite in ourselves the deepest sentiments of love and joy we possibly can, we may propose to ourselves, either the joy the blessed Virgin felt on the day of our Saviour's resurrection, when she beheld him triumph most gloriously over death—or the joy wherewith the Holy Scripture affirms the patriarch Jacob was transported on hearing that his son Joseph lived, and was made superintendant of all Egypt. The excess of his joy was such, that, *receiving as it were a new life; I am satisfied*, said he, *since my son Joseph is yet alive, I will see him before I die.**

We may also apply this exercise to what relates to the glory of the blessed Virgin, and that of the Saints : and

* Gen. 45. 27. & 28.

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this will be a very laudable devotion; if we employ therein a part of our prayer upon the day of their feast.— For this is to give them the greatest testimony they can receive from us; when we rejoice with them at the felicity they possess. Wherefore the church upon the feast of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption, proposes to us this exercise in these words : *To-day the blessed Virgin Mary mounted the heavens ; rejoice that she reigns with Jesus Christ for all eternity.* And upon the day of the same feast and several others, the same church begins the office of the Mass by inviting us to the same practice, and exciting us by the example of the angels : *Let us all rejoice in our Lord, in celebrating this feast in honour of the blessed Virgin Mary ; at whose assumption the angels rejoice and praise the Son of God.* There is also

another advantage in practising this exercise in respect of the Saints, and chiefly of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ ; since hereby we come to elevate ourselves to the exercise, which relates to the divinity, and we make it easy. For our Saviour himself teaches us, that he is the way and the gate whereby we must have access to his eternal father.

This exercise has also its different degrees, even when we practise it in reference to God, as he is God. We may also bring it more within our reach, by descending to the consideration of things here below. For altho' it is true, that God in himself increaseth not ; because he is infinite ; and that we cannot wish him any good, he possesses not already ; he may nevertheless receive an exterior addition from his creatures, inasmuch as they

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come to know him, to love and glorify him the more ; and by consequence we may exercise this sort of love towards him, in wishing him ardently this kind of exterior good. To this end, when in our prayer we come to consider how worthy God is of being loved and served by all his creatures ; we must then apply ourselves to wish that all men present and to come may know him, love and glorify him in all things.—How happy should we be, O my God, were we able to convert all the infidels and sinners throughout the whole world ; that we could but hinder all persons from ever offending you, and make all obey you, and study nothing else for the future but to serve you ! *Hallowed be thy name.* Let all the earth adore you, and chant forth your praises. Let it sing canticles of praise*

* Mat. 6. 9.

*to your holy name !** We can entertain ourselves thus in this exercise ; and by representing to ourselves a thousand sorts of services which creatures can render God, we shall find sufficient matter to dilate our wishes upon.

Thence each one coming to reflect upon himself, ought to apply his thoughts to an earnest desire of accomplishing the will of God, and promoting his glory in whatsoever depends upon him : and from henceforth imitating Jesus Christ, *who always performed such things as were acceptable to his Eternal Father,*† he may form a determined resolution of embracing with joy whatsoever he knows to be according to the will and glory of God. For, *he who says he knows God and nevertheless keeps not his commandments, is a liar and has*

* Ps. 65. 4.

† John 8. 29.

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*not truth in him. But he who keeps his words, in this man the love of God perfectly abides.** In like manner, to attain a real love of God, and entire conformity to his holy will, it suffices not that by considering the infinite good God possesses, we turn it into a subject of joy, and so wish all creatures to love and glorify him. We must wholly devote ourselves, and employ our whole force to the fulfilling the divine will; since we cannot say from our heart we desire the greater glory of God, unless we contribute all we are able to the accomplishing of it. It is in this sort of love our soul is exercised, when in time of prayer, it conceives a real desire, and a firm resolution of performing the will of God, in things proposed to it at that time, and in whatever may afterwards occur; and this exercise is

* 1. John 2. 4. & 5.

what we ought more frequently to use in all our prayers.

We have here opened a field wide enough to employ ourselves a long time in this exercise ; and have sufficiently explained the perfection included therein, and the profit we may hence receive. There is now remaining but that we lay our hand to the work, and begin from this moment to repeat upon earth, what we are hereafter to repeat for eternity in heaven. It is here we must begin to enkindle in ourselves the fire of the love of God. But since this *divine fire has its source in Sion, and its furnace in Jerusalem,*† it will never attain the perfection of a full blaze, till we arrive at the heavenly Jerusalem—*i.e.* till we attain the felicity of glory.

† Isa. 31. 9.



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